

V.I.P. ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY:

Jinhyeok Jang
Ph.D. Student in Political Science
Rice University

Legislative Elections in South Korea

South Korea has a single national assembly, named “Kukhoe” in Korean. The formal title in English is “The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.” Rumor has it that two-house system would be adopted if the two Koreas, North Korea and South Korea, are unified; it is a main reason why Kukhoe has such a large room.

299 legislators are total members of the National Assembly. General election is held in every four years. The election is held under a mixed-member majoritarian system that combines 245 single-member districts with 54 proportional representation (PR) seats. Each voter casts two votes; one is for district tier, and the other is for a closed party list tier.

The threshold for PR seats is 3%. If a party can not get at least one seat from district tier or 2% votes of total valid votes from PR tier, it meets compulsory dissolution. It is possible that one party can survive even if it does not get any seat. In the 2008 general election, thirteen parties participated, but only seven parties survived; six parties had seats and one party survived without seat.

Legislative election and presidential election are held separately, and divided government usually appears. In contrast to United States, legislators in South Korea follow the party leadership, and therefore political gridlock between the president and the national assembly happens repeatedly.

There is no term limit, but senior legislators, usually considered when he or she has been elected over three terms, are rare. It is mainly because those candidates are generally selected by each party, not by primary election like United States. Korean voters require that party leadership should consider a higher standard for selecting their candidates. A legislator is not to be selected as a candidate in next election when he or she cannot meet the standard.

Last but not least, Election Day is an official holiday.

References

Article

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