

Voters with Disabilities in Election Processes in Korea

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NATIONAL ELECTION
COMMISSION

Importance of Guaranteeing Equal Access to Electoral Processes

- For those registered as disabled according to the "Welfare of Disabled Persons Act."
- Electoral law stipulates the rights of disabled voters to participate in elections.
- ※ "Person with Disabilities" is defined **as people who have a significant limitation in daily life and social activities due to physical and mental disorders.** (*The Welfare of Disabled Persons Act*)



Articles in the Constitution for Voters with Disabilities

- **All citizens shall be assured of human dignity and worth and have the right to pursue happiness.**
(Article 10: Human dignity and worth as well as the right to pursue happiness)
- **All citizens shall have the right to vote and hold public office under the conditions as prescribed by the Law.** *(Article 24 and 25: Full suffrage)*



Regulation of Election Law for Promoting Participation of Disabled Voters in Elections



Compilation of Voter's List

- Done by each local administrative districts based on the National Resident Registration System. (*Article 37, Public Official Election Act*)
- Therefore makes it easier to include voters with disabilities with no additional assistance required.



Mail-in Voting at Place of Residence

- A person who is unable to move freely on the ground of his/her serious physical disability and/or a person who stays at a hospital or a nursing home may apply for voting at a place of abode. (*Article 38, Public Official Election Act*)



Mail-in Voting at Place of Residence - How?

- System introduced November 11th, 1992
- **Step 1:** The head of each local administrative districts sends a voting information with an enclosed application form to registered disabled voters no later than 10 days before the voters list preparation date.



Mail-in Voting at Place of Residence - How?

- **Step 2:** The ECs then send ballots to those that registered with a brochure to inform them of voting procedures no later than 10 days before the election day.
- **Step 3:** A person voting at his/her residence fills out the ballot received from the ECs and send it by registered mail.
- Residence voting shall be effective only if the ballot arrives at the ECs before 6 p.m. on election day.



Actual Implementation 2010-2014

2012 General Election	2012 Presidential Election	2014 Local Elections
47,000	58,000	67,000

#120,163 mail-in votes in 2014 local elections including military forces, police, etc.



Balloting Booths in Organizations or Facilities

- The head of a hospital/nursing home and an institution/facility for the disabled that accommodates registered voters should report the name, location and size of the institution or facility to the ECs.
- If the facility accommodates 10 or more registered voters, the facility shall establish a balloting booth for polling at the abode.
- In smaller facilities, polling stations can still be created on request.



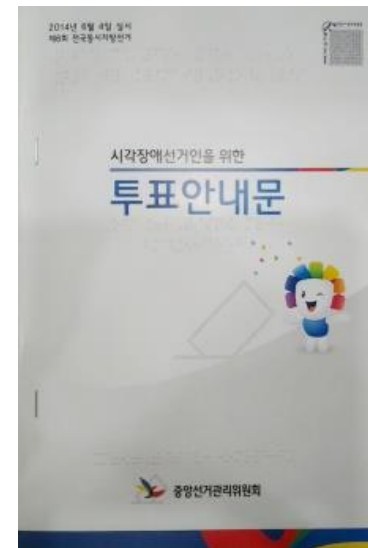
Support for Candidates with Disabilities

- A sponsoring system was introduced in January 25, 2010
- Goal to guarantee equal campaigning opportunities for candidates with disabilities.
- Disabled candidates are eligible to have one additional assistant, paid for by the state, outside the number of election workers that the law allows.



Braille Voting Guides

- Publish and send Braille voting guide to households with visually impaired people to provide voting information. (*Article 153, Public Official Election Act*)
- Enacted into law and mandated on July 28, 2011.



Support for Braille Campaign Brochures

- The government covers the cost of Braille campaign brochures. (*Public Official Election Act*)
- As campaign brochures are forms of election campaigning, they are to be provided to visually impaired people in Braille.
- By bearing the cost for Braille brochure publication, the government guarantees the right to vote of the visually impaired



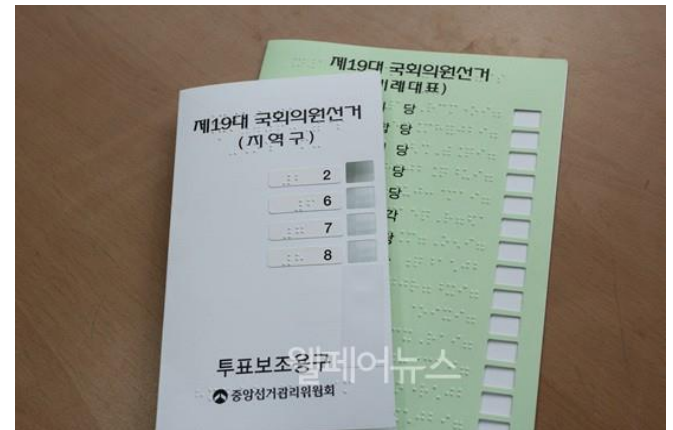
Sign Language for the Hard of Hearing

- Sign language and subtitles are provided during election campaigning, such as in election debates, campaign commercials and televised campaign speeches.
- Introduced February 16, 2000



Voting Aids for the Visually Impaired

- Braille voting aids are prepared and distributed to assist a voter who is unable to record his/her vote in person due to a visual impairment
- Introduced in November 11, 1992.



Voting Assistant

- A voter who is unable to record his/her vote in person due to a visual or physical impairment may be accompanied by his/her family or two persons nominated by himself to assist in his voting.
- Introduced in November 11, 1992.



Subsidies for Political Parties that Nominate Candidates with Disabilities

- A subsidy was introduced in February 25, 2010
- Goal to increase political participation by people with disabilities and fund the election expenses for candidates with disabilities.
- For elections for National Assembly members and local council members, a subsidy is provided to parties that nominate people with disabilities. The subsidy is limited to be spent solely on election expenses for candidates with disabilities.



Subsidize for Political Parties that Nominate Candidates with Disabilities

- Total amount available to parties: 20 won multiplied by the number of entire voters in the last general election
- Appropriated to political parties based on the number of candidates nominated by the parties, the number of seats each party holds and the ratio of total votes obtained in the general election for National Assembly members.



Subsidize for Political Parties that Nominate Candidates with Disabilities

(unit price: USD)

	2010 Local Elections	2012 General Election	2014 Local Elections
Budget Appropriation	755,920	755,921	804,101
Actual Amount Paid	226,776	No party eligible	522,665



Voting Convenience for Disabled Voters Provided by the NEC



Provision of Information through the Media

- Through press releases and interviews with the media, the National Election Commission advertises the system to provide reasonable accommodation for voters with disabilities.
- The goal is to increase participation amongst disabled voters.



Establishment of Polling Stations at Ground Level

- Ensure polling stations are placed on the ground level to make it accessible for the elderly and people with disabilities who may have problems with stairs
- 12,371 out of 13,665 polling stations nationwide (90.6%) are placed on the ground level
- ECs install temporary polling booths at the entrance of a polling stations above ground level.



Establishment of Temporary Ramps

- Furnish the entrance of a polling station with temporary ramps for motorized scooters (wheelchairs) to access without any difficulties.
- Goal to assist voters with physical disabilities in entry to the polling place.



Establishment of Special Polling Booths

- In order for people with physical disabilities to cast a vote themselves, the NEC manufactures and installs special polling booths to make it accessible for motorized scooters (wheelchairs) to enter a polling booth.



Provision of Vehicles for People with Disabilities

- Upon request, ECs provide vehicles equipped with a wheelchair lift and assistants exclusively for voters with physical disabilities.
- ECs provide special transportation service for voters who live in areas with inconvenient transport. (Around 1,800 lines nationwide)



Voice Voting Guide CD

- Produce and send a voice voting guide CD together with the Braille voting guide to the visually impaired.



Two-Dimensional Barcode for Voice Conversion ('Voiceeye')

- A two-dimensional barcode which, once scanned, converts text into voice, is printed on various election materials. This is provided to the visually impaired with Braille voting guide.
- Introduced in the 19th general election (April 11, 2012).
- ※ Recently, the Voiceeye software was introduced and provided to political parties and candidates to include in their campaign brochures.



Provision of Voting Guide for Sign Language Interpretation

- Voting guides that contain a QR code which, once scanned, shows video footage of a sign language interpreter giving voting information.
- Introduced in the 6th local elections (June 4, 2014).



Improvement through Consultations with DPOs

- Hold discussion sessions to increase voting turnout rates among people with disabilities
- After and before elections conduct meetings with DPOs to hear their opinions on the improvement of voting participation
- After gathering of DPOs' opinions, the NEC makes plans to revise laws, and improve reasonable accommodation in terms of administration.



Improvement through Consultations with DPOs

- NEC has the authority to submit opinions on revisions to election law.



Thank you

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