

What is the best way to ensure the political rights of Koreans?

The Next Generation Leaders Forum started at 6pm on April 8 at the Wilshire Hotel under sponsorship of the Federation of Korean Associations, USA, and attendees earnestly deliberated on this issue, with participation of the newly appointed Korean Consulate-General Yeon-seong Shim.



Report on the Next Generation Leaders Forum

President Chris Moonkey Nam of the Federation of Korean Associations, USA, declared the theme of the gathering: "The Fulfillment of the Political Rights of Korean Expatriates." He pointed out several disadvantages of the overseas election system and practices, and strongly advocated for corrective measures, including allowing mail-in voter registration, opening

populations in order to collect votes.

The Problems of Current Voting Practices as Described by President Chris Moonkey Nam

There are approximately 2.3 million Korean expatriates living in 109 different countries. Only allowing them to vote in 166 designated official Korean diplomatic locations significantly reduces their voting participation. As a

In the case of the Korean General-Consulate Office in Los Angeles, approximately 200,000 to 300,000 voters are designated to vote there. Handling this level of participation is simply beyond the capacity of the General-Consulate Office. Additionally, there are regions that are too far away for people to conveniently vote at the Office, including Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico. For example,

designated voting station in person to register to vote acts as a serious hindrance to exercising their right to vote. In order for a Korean expatriate to vote, he or she must visit the designated voting station twice—on the day of registration and on the day of the election. This doubles the inconvenience and cost to the voter. President Chris Moonkey Nam states, "The current laws deny the right of voters to register and vote by mail. They are required to register and vote at a few scattered voting stations. This effectively denies overseas voters their right to vote. All countries with advanced democracies allow voters to mail in their ballots. The concern regarding election fraud is groundless and should not be used as an excuse to deny mail-in ballots." He strongly supported the adoption of mail-in ballots and a system where election workers travel to distant locations to collect votes.

By speaking about the issue, President Chris Moonkey Nam brought attention to the problems of the current voting laws, the pros and cons of holding multiple nationalities and the merits and disadvantages of various foreign policies. He also proposed a number of solutions to enable Korean expatriates to



fully exercise their right to vote. Throughout the event, participants were focused and passionate. All attendees agreed to work towards correcting the problems of the current Korean voting laws.

On April 9, participants went on a two-day solidarity trip to King's Canyon. In the beautiful canyon, the participants engaged in honest dialogue, and reaffirmed their common goals: to actively participate in US politics to guarantee the rights of Korean-Americans, to actively participate in Korean elections as expatriates to fulfill their civic duties as citizens of the Republic of Korea, and, to that end, to ensure that Korea expatriates are able to fully enjoy their right to vote. During the evening of the first night, in a rented restaurant hall, a debate was held to discuss the US interim election results and several newly-rising Korean-American politicians. The debate raged on with passion and sincerity for over two hours, going past 11pm. After the debate ended, the attendees joined in to do a line dance together to signify their mutual friendship that overcomes political differences. The next day, next-generation leaders of the Korean community visited the Korean Independence Gate standing in Reedley City (Fresno County). In a solemn atmosphere, they held a moment of silence honoring the early Korean immigrants, and reaffirmed that they would continue the work of these first pioneers by working to build a proud Korean community in the United States. After arriv-

ing at King's Canyon, which still had snow in the valleys, participants toured various trekking courses of the canyon. Surrounded by the beauty of nature, they again reaffirmed their determination to build Korean communities as tall, majestic and strong as the giant pine trees surrounding them.

After an outdoor picnic, the attendees returned to LA. On the way back, everyone again reaffirmed their determination to keep the proud culture and spirit of Korea alive in the US, and to, as representatives of various Korean communities, fight as hard as they can for the rights of Korean-Americans. No support is provided from the Korean government for this fight. These Korean private representatives and leaders provide volunteer and community services to Korean-Americans and protect the political rights of Koreans residing in the United States by volunteering their own time and spending money out of their own pockets. For them, this trip was the perfect opportunity to enjoy long-needed recreation and recharge their spirits.

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a voting station outside official diplomatic locations for every 20,000 voters, when the voting precinct is projected to have more than 20,000 people voting, and allowing the Republic of Korea's National Election Commission employees to visit distant locations with concentrated Korean

matter of practice, they can only vote at designated official diplomatic locations of the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, in order to vote, Korean expatriates must visit those places twice: first to register, then to vote. This is extremely inconvenient.

a voter residing in Arizona must be willing to travel for two days and spend \$700 to \$800 to reach the General Consulate-Office in LA in order to exercise his or her right to vote. Furthermore, the fact that the current Korean overseas voting laws require all voters to visit the