

WOMEN & POLITICS

Korean Institute for Women & Politics

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KIWP was established in 1989 with the aims of heightening women's political consciousness and expanding political participation. Since that time, KIWP has worked relentlessly to accomplish those objectives, both domestically and in the international arena, through a broad range of programs and undertakings. These have included both academic and more pragmatically oriented workshops and seminars and the publication of materials designed to promote strategies to support women candidates in the electoral process. We pride ourselves on our commitment to these goals and on our resolve to maintain a pro-active stance until such time as genuine equality exists in the political realm.

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● Message from the Chairperson

2010 Local Election and Women



Jung-sook Kim (Ed.D)/Chairperson, KIWP

In many countries of the world, women politicians are displaying remarkable leadership skills. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was chosen as the 1st of the “most influential women in the world” by Forbes for the 4th time this year. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and major figures in the U.S. government, President Cristina Fernandez of Argentina, and Prime Minister Sonya Gandhi of India were among the top most influential women, and many other women political leaders are drawing the attention of the world.

In many fields in contemporary Korean society, women’s activities are developing remarkably, and women’s social participation is becoming a new engine of national competitiveness. The employment ratio of women managers in companies has increased, and it is not newsworthy that women’s advancement into various kinds of professional occupations is on the rise. Corporate management and senior public posts that used to be considered the exclusive domain of males begin to witness gender composition change.

National and social development will depend largely on how well women’s human resources are managed and on how well the society is equipped with an institutional framework that will foster the active advancement of women in society. In order to more actively utilize women as human resource, diverse and continuous efforts and support should be provided for the expansion of women’s political participation.

However, the female political participation rate in Korea continues to stand at a very low level. The 5% of women politicians in early 2000 has increased to only 13.7% (National Assembly) and the ranking of women’s political participation in public posts increased from the 101st in the world to the 84th. Korean women’s political participation rate is much lower than that of Northern Europe (41.4%), America (21.7%), and even that of the world average (18.4%) and even well below the average in Asia (18%). Looking at the results of the local elections held on May 31, 2006, the percentage of women who ran for election in broad and basic districts accounted for only 5.2% and 4.9% respectively. The proportions of

women among the elected were 4.9% for the broad district, and 4.4% for the basic district, which was a little higher than the 2002 election. Based on this information, a problem can be readily identified -- there is a great shortage of women politicians who can represent the needs of modern women at a time when women's demand for social participation is increasing. We can see that institutional support to guarantee a certain level of women's political participation is also necessary. In the case of France, which is relatively advanced in an institutional sense, "Male and Female Same Number Nomination Law" is being implemented to nominate women for 50% as candidates for various levels. Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Norway guarantee 40% women's political participation under "the Gender Equality Act." On the other hand, the Korean political party law of 2005 provided 30% quota system for women's nomination for districts, but since it is an advisory provision without any binding force, political parties do not abide by it properly in elections

Therefore, starting from the local elections next year, political parties need special and radical measures to allocate a certain percentage quota for women candidates in the nomination for elected posts in districts. As a way to implement this, I would propose the establishment of what might be called "the Pan-women political network " to synergize the power of women's organizations, academics, and politicians, and urge the implementation of the quota system guaranteeing 40% or more women in district nominations.

The political reality of the world in the 21st Century requires a new women's leadership equipped with expert competence and experience. The 5th national simultaneous local election to be held in June next year heightens the expectation for another prologue of an era of new women's politics. More than anything else, the voters should appreciate the activities of women politicians as they are, and women politicians should show active determination to compete and be evaluated equally with men. Women's organizations should focus their efforts and find and train women to prepare them to compete with men, thereby strengthening a foundation for women's politics. Looking forward to women's hopefully grand improvement in the local elections next year, now is the time to start the concerted movement of women's organizations for that purpose.

● Opinion

2010 Local Election and Women's Political Participation: With focus on the characteristics of participation and election strategies



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Political power and a democratic system oriented toward change and reform have, to some extent, consolidated since 1987. Such a reality will have a positive impact on changing the beliefs and attitudes that women have so far held. The core of the 2010 local election strategy of women candidates is to change women and draw out qualitative changes in women's political participation and gender equality.

Of course, women's political participation is not simply a given set in concrete, but rather is the fruit of fierce struggles and considerable effort. When looking at the development stages of countries that are realizing advanced democracy, they all, without exception, went through the process of expanding women's political participation. Our society should also open the era of genuine gender equality through expanding women's political participation to realize mature democracy going beyond the stage of procedural democracy. For this, women's organizations, academic professionals, and the government should prepare a 『Women's Participation Roadmap』 in detail and pursue it with determination and consistency. As such, measures to expand women's political participation can be considered in both institutional dimensions and as a function of consciousness. From an institutional perspective, the nomination system, election system, and the political party system are the key components. Research results lead us to conclude that the most realistic alternative to enhance women political development and the expansion of political participation is for major political parties to strengthen the quota system for women candidates. Prior to the 2004 general election, the government and opposition parties had reviewed the introduction of the women's broad district election system. However, this idea was not realized, pushed by public opinion that reverse discrimination of sorts was against the ideals of Constitution. But the more women advance into National Assemblies, the higher the national incomes tend to be and the less corruption there is. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair of England

contributed to eliminating corruption by expanding women's political participation by introducing the women only election district system in the district of high probability of winning where women compete against each other. Under the current united election law, each party is required to allocate 50% to women candidates when recommending proportional representation. Some say there are inherent unconstitutional elements, but this system should be implemented based on national consensus on the realization of gender equality.

Therefore, there is a need to legislate, although for a limited time, so that, also in the district election, each political party would recommend a certain proportion of women. Furthermore, active measures should be reviewed whereby the Central Election Committee rejects the candidate list of political parties in case of violation, rather than a passive measure of reducing the government support paid to political parties. However, "the informal rule of district nomination" should take root under which those women who received excellent review in legislative activities or social activities are given priority consideration as women candidates to be nominated to districts.

In addition, as measures to improve institutions, we can recommend consolidation of a gender friendly system, joint management of elections, institutionalization of election scheduling, expanded implementation of a joint election management system, and reorganization of election districts. If 30% quota system for districts is not implemented, as the second best policy, the restructuring of an election district system should be actively considered.

There are many possible arrangements regarding quota representation. For example, in a small, lightly populated district at least one female representative could be guaranteed. In a somewhat larger district the number could be increased to three to five females.

Through the above example, the implications for future strategies and the tasks for expanding women's political participation and formulating women's policies can be reviewed as follows. First, it is urgent to consolidate institutional devices for women with high political efficacy to move away from political cynicism to actively participate for social change and reform as "the intelligence in action."

Second, many women's organizations and public opinion leaders should lead a proactive movement so that women can have broad interest in politics and society as a whole. It should be explicitly provided in the Political Party Act that political parties are mandated to run Women's Political Academy to train competent women politicians and a certain

proportion of political party funding should be used for that purpose. And those with political aspirations should be required to acquire certificates by granting the political party nomination rights to those who have completed the Women's Political Academy. Third, it is necessary to develop active and continued process of socialization so that women's ideology as a frame of reference of the worldview can have a more dynamic nature than before.

● KIWP Major Activities of 2009

○ Debates to Commemorate the 20th Anniversary of KIWP



KIWP held the Lecture to commemorate the 20th Anniversary in the Press Center, on July 30. Chairperson Jung-sook Kim, directors of the Institute, advisory members, and sponsors participated to discuss the history and activities of KIWP under the theme of “Present and Future of Women in Korean Politics”. Moreover, this was followed by the discussion on how to expand women’s political participation in 2010 local elections among participants. Through this discussion, the widely respected leaders in women politics promised to strengthen women networks and offer advanced training programs in order to fulfill the women’s political empowerment.

○ 2010 Local Election Women’s Political Academy: My M.V.P! (Mission, Vision, Passion)



Korean Institute for Women & Politics (KIWP) and Korean National Council of Women jointly opened a 10-week women’s political education 「2010 Local election Women’s Political Academy: My M.V.P! (Mission, Vision, Passion) held at the auditorium on the 2nd Floor of the Korean National Council of Women. This educational program was held for 80 women who would run for the 5th national concurrent local election. It provided a theoretical framework for understanding local politics as well as courses on practices which can be used to strengthen political skills of each participant. The program was held on Thursdays from May 21 to July 30. Many women said they would like concentrated training on concrete details required to prepare for the election next year. These concrete details would include matters such as the relevant election laws, election strategies and election campaign techniques, general education regarding legislative activities after getting

elected and practical education on the legislation of by laws. The Korean Institute for Women & Politics provided the programs to support the formulation of systematic plans for the trainees to win local elections, and encouraged the pan-women political network to expand women's political participation. Through this, it recruited talented women in preparation for local elections this year, and carried out the movement to realize women's nomination in each political party as well as a campaigned to support women candidates through the nationwide women political network based on powerful networks among women's organizations.

○ Parallel Event with the 53rd UNCSW



The Korean Institute for Women & Politics participated in the 53rd UN Commission on the status of Women (UNCSW) as the representative organization of Korean women NGO Network on March 4, 2009. The Korean Institute for Women & Politics also held an NGO Parallel Event as a kind of private diplomacy aiming to publicize women's policies and the status of the women's movement in Korea to this world body. About 100 women leaders and NGO representatives participated. Information on the condition of women in each country in Asia was exchanged, and, participants shared in-depth discussion on how to promote women's status quo and resolve the gender inequality sustained in Asia. Furthermore, the event provided an excellent opportunity to expand effective networks among women's organizations.

○ Participated in the general meeting of ICW

Jung-sook Kim, the Chairperson of KIWP, was newly elected to the board member of International Council of Women (ICW) in the 32nd General Assembly of ICW held in Johannesburg, the Republic of South Africa between October 13 and 20, 2009. Among the total of nine candidates in the election of new board members, the five candidates were elected, and the Chairperson KIM of KIWP won by an overwhelming majority. ICW's General Assembly is composed of the opening and closing ceremonies, seminars, regional

council meetings and the election of new officers. The election of new officers is one of the most important ceremonies with great attention. In particular, as a new board member, the Chairperson KIM, is from the region of Asia while the elected president and vice president of ICW are from the European region. So, the concerned of ICW expect the balanced development of women's and policy issues across Europe and Asia-Pacific region.

○ Event to Commemorate Girls' Day



KIWP participated in the Ceremony to commemorate the Girls' Day held at the Seoul Grand Park Water Fountain Plaza where about 4500 girls and youth nationwide, as well as 100 women's organizations, participated on April 25, 2009. KIWP was the organization which proclaimed Girls' Day, led by the Girl Scouts of Korea. A primary objective of Girls' Day was further the interest of girls, young women, and the population at large in empowering girls and young women. There is emphasis on training them as the next generation of leaders. During the celebration, it conducted a leadership survey with girls and young women. Results of the survey indicate that girls and young women had what can be seen as positive. Prized traits of an effective leader were thought to a challenging spirit and a generous heart. Behind the theme is the fundamental goal to nurture responsible members with self-confidence in the future.

● Future Activities in 2010

○ Dispatch representatives to the 54th UNCSW and hold a Parallel event

KIWP plans to send representatives to the 54th UNCSW to be held with the theme of "15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action(1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly(2000)" at the UN Headquarters in New York held from to March 3, 2010, and hold a Parallel event on "Climate change and gender responsiveness in Asia-Pacific".

○ Debates to commemorate the 21st anniversary of KIWP

KIWP will hold a debate to commemorate its 21st anniversary at the Press Center in July, 2010. Directors, advisors, and members of KIWP as well as general public will participate. The focus will be on comparison of the status of women's political participation in advanced nations with Korean context. The major goal will seek a new paradigm of the women's movement in ten years into the 21st century.

○ Women's Sorority for the Equal Number of Men and Women in 2010 Local Election

Ahead of the 5th local election, KIWP will actively engage in realizing the gender equality in local politics through leading nationwide women networks as the operating member of committee in the Unification of Women's sorority.

○ Call for articles on Women's Policy Development

KIWP will call for research articles on women's agenda and women's policy as a whole by both undergraduate and graduate students nationwide, in order to review women-related issues perceived by students and the general public alike.

○ Publish Korean and English Newsletter in regular basis

Join us!

The Korean Institute for Women & Politics strives to raise women's political consciousness and at the same time provide an environment enabling women's political empowerment. We welcome members who wish to contribute to our efforts to promote women in politics. For more information, please contact us.

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NGO in SPECIAL consultative status with the UN ECOSOC

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