

MINBYUN-Lawyers for a Democratic Society

Comprehensive Reform Measures for Strengthening and Advancing Democracy

Based on Nationwide Regional Forums Held
Following the 2024 Constitutional Crisis

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I. Diagnosis of the Current Functioning of Korean Democracy: Crisis and Resilience

1. The 2024 Constitutional Crisis and the State of Institutions: Overconcentration of Presidential Power and System Resilience

The declaration of emergency martial law on December 3, 2024, was a shocking reminder that the institutional democracy South Korea has built over the 37 years since democratization in 1987 could collapse in an instant. This brought to life the risk of excessive concentration of power in the presidency, which had been identified as one of the most fundamental vulnerabilities of Korean democracy. As repeatedly noted in regional forums held across the country, the 1987 system succeeded in establishing electoral democracy but did not fully evolve into what is often referred to as “embedded democracy.” In particular, the December 3 crisis revealed the inadequacy of institutional safeguards to ensure the practical protection of political and civil liberties and horizontal accountability—mechanisms essential for effectively checking the president’s excessive authority.

At the same time, however, this constitutional crisis paradoxically served as an occasion to demonstrate the systemic resilience of Korean democracy. Unlike the military coups of the 1980s, the December 3 self-coup attempt by Yoon Suk-yeol was thwarted because core elements of state governance—the upper echelons of the military command, the bureaucracy, and even the broader economic system—did not collapse in the face of an unconstitutional presiden-

tial order but instead continued to operate as intended. This shows that, despite the aberrant actions of certain political actors and a handful of military commanders, the institutional durability of the state apparatus has matured to a certain degree.

From legal and constitutional-historical perspectives, the December 3 declaration of emergency martial law constitutes an unconstitutional act and falls within the scope of rebellion. It clearly violated the substantive and procedural requirements stipulated in Article 77 of the Constitution and related provisions, and has been assessed as “even more hasty and regressive than Park Chung-hee’s emergency decrees or Chun Doo-hwan’s expansion of martial law 45 years ago.” In Korea’s constitutional history, it represents the third self-coup—following those of 1952 (the Busan Political Upheaval) and 1972 (Yushin)—and is further recorded as the first self-coup in Korean constitutional history to fail.

The December 3 insurrection originated from the actions of the president as an individual and from a power structure that failed to restrain him, while a substantial part of the system—the bureaucracy, the military, local governments, and civil society—either refused to comply or actively resisted. Accordingly, future reforms must focus on the surgical containment of presidential power and the institutionalization of systemic resilience.

2. The Return of the Public Square and the Evolution of Citizen Participation: Fandom, Online Communities, and Generational Integration

The spontaneous and rapid mobilization of citizens who gathered in front of the National Assembly and in public squares across Korea immediately after the December 3 martial law declaration reaffirmed that the ultimate safeguard of Korean democracy lies in a vigilant civil awareness even prior to the written provisions of the Constitution. This response shows that Korean society has internalized a collective learning that in moments of crisis, the way forward is toward “more democracy.” The rainbow flags that filled the squares served as a visual affirmation of this inclusive solidarity.

What is particularly noteworthy is the qualitative evolution of square-based democracy this time. As discussed in the Daegu forum, unlike the 2016 candlelight protests, the resistance in 2024 was not led by prominent political figures or large civic organizations. Instead, what stood out was the rise of communities built around shared identities or interests—such as the “2030 light stick-cheering generation” in Daegu and the “Kia Tigers fan group” in Gwangju. This marks the emergence of a network-based square democracy, in which groups that initially formed online around shared hobbies naturally expanded into discussions of social and political agendas, and in times of crisis rapidly translated into offline collective action.

Moreover, diverse generations—from the past “stroller protesters” to today’s youth—coexisted rather than remaining segmented, and the culture of public assembly itself has evolved. As noted in both the Gwangju and Seoul forums, an inclusive rally culture that respects others has begun to take root: whereas “feminist zones” were

once established to prevent sexual harassment at demonstrations, assemblies now begin with a public reading of a “gender equality pledge.” The Seoul forum further observed that today’s assemblies—no longer centered solely on civic groups or labor unions—have evolved into new forms of gatherings, in which coalitions of diverse individuals, including women and sexual and gender minorities, communicate and build shared empathy, potentially serving as a foundation for democracy.

3. Current State of Democracy by Region: Imbalances and Specificities

Discussions held between April and September in six cities nationwide—Daegu, Gwangju, Busan, Daejeon, Chuncheon, and Seoul—indicated that, in assessing democracy amid the constitutional crisis, regions shared certain perceptions and challenges while also exhibiting distinct differences. In particular, participants outside the capital region pointed out that Seoul-centric structures and entrenched regional political landscapes are producing imbalances in democratic practice. (A summary table of key issues from each regional forum is presented for reference below.)

Region	Diagnosis	Key Factors	Main Proposals
Daegu (Apr 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong conservative orientation, presence of “Yeongnam hegemony” Limited impact of a central government crisis in the context of local autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of far-right groups and ordinary conservative citizens Breakdown of political dialogue; youth political disengagement and out-migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To normalize political education (restore teachers’ basic political rights) To urge conservative parties to sever ties with “anti-constitutional forces”
Gwangju (Apr 28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong cohesion as the “symbolic site of democratization” Evolution into an inclusive protest culture (gender equality, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional marginalization due to Seoul and metropolitan area-centrism Rigidity of single-party dominance; exclusion of minorities within the progressive camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To guarantee minority rights (sexual minorities, migrants) To address gender imbalance in “Gwangju-style jobs”
Busan (Jun 17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High proportion of elderly population, entrenched conservatism Democratic resilience shown by 70,000 citizens mobilizing against martial law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow public sphere (with the local media failing to function properly) Dominance of a single party (People Power Party): 17 of 18 regional seats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reform the winner-take-all (e.g., introducing multi-member constituency system) To revitalize local media and public forums
Daejeon (Jun 25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Casting-vote” region; “no-comment cities” (political apathy) Declining trend in voter turnout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservative bias and economic vulnerability of local media Unilateral and exclusive governance by the mayor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce a runoff system for local elections To permit local parties (abolishing the central-party requirement)
Chuncheon (Jul 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong conservative base but active resistance to martial law “For whom does democracy not exist?” (exclusion of minorities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Far-right networks entrenched within institutions (forces opposing anti-discrimination legislation) Competition-driven education and the disappearance of democracy education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To democratize education (moving away from competition-based schooling, revitalizing debate) To rectify discriminatory administrative actions, such as Chuncheon City’s refusal to permit the Queer Festival

<p>Seoul (Sep 11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High electoral democracy, but low participation, equality, freedom, and integration • Anti-democratic governance of Mayor Oh Se-hoon (abolition of TBS, suppression of disability protests, etc.) • Weakening of civil society independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-party dominance in the city council (monopoly by a certain party) • Absence of democratic citizenship education (universities) • Functioning as a hub for anti-constitutional forces and far-right discourse • Growing far-right youth base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To normalize democracy education (universities) • To guarantee minority rights to counter hate and exclusion • To restore the autonomy of civil society
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4. Fundamental Threats to Democracy: Social Polarization and the Rise of Anti-Constitutional Forces

Across the regional forums, it was consistently observed that the essence of the current democratic crisis in Korea is no longer a traditional ideological divide between “conservatives vs. progressives,” but rather a confrontation between “democratic forces safeguarding the Constitution (Constitution defending forces)” and “anti-democratic forces rejecting the constitutional order (anti-constitutional forces).” These anti-constitutional forces either led or defended a series of unprecedented “anti-constitutional, ahistorical, and anti-political” events during the insurrectionary phase—the first attempted self-coup by an incumbent president since the establishment of direct presidential elections, and the first violent seizure of a court (the January 19 Western District Court incident). Moreover, the fact that a sitting president who previously served as Prosecutor General openly dismissed judicial rulings in their entirety, and that high-ranking state officials—such as former Minister of Government Legislation Lee Wan-gyu, National Human Rights Commission Standing Commissioner Kim Yong-won, and former Minister of National Defense Kim Yong-hyun—publicly denied the constitutional order, demonstrates that the core of the

crisis lies in the repudiation of even the minimal principles of the rule of law.

This “anti-constitutional force” openly rejects the basic rules of democracy. They refused to accept election outcomes and actively circulated claims of electoral fraud—conspiracy theories that ultimately reached Yoon Suk-yeol himself and were invoked as a pretext for declaring martial law. As demonstrated by the riot at the Seoul Western District Court, they engaged in physical violence against constitutional institutions, defended the unconstitutional December 3 martial law as “lawful,” and even now, politicians belonging to the main opposition party (the People Power Party) continued to either endorse these actions or fail to break from them. This phenomenon aligns with a wider international pattern in which election denial and incitement to violence, when fused with conspiracy narratives, rapidly consolidate into organized political action—as seen in the United States Capitol attack¹ and the storm-

¹ In the United States, supporters of Donald Trump who spread claims of electoral fraud stormed and occupied the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021—the day Congress was scheduled to certify Joe Biden’s election victory—before the riot was eventually suppressed. After returning to office as the 47th President, Trump pardoned more than 1,500 organizers and participants involved in the attack on his first day in office, January 20, 2025.

ing of Brazil’s National Congress².

The discourse of these anti-constitutional forces is also deeply entangled with historical animosity rooted in the “red complex,” a legacy shaped by the division of the Korean Peninsula. Far-right YouTube channels and similar outlets have labeled state-perpetrated atrocities—such as the Jeju April 3 Incident and the May 18 Democratization Movement—as “riots,” branding innocent civilian victims with outdated stigmas such as “Workers’ Party of South Korea” or “reds,” thereby distorting historical fact. This constitutes a revival of hate rhetoric once used as a tool of authoritarian rule, now redeployed as a logic to justify the current anti-constitutional behavior.

² In Brazil, supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro stormed and occupied the Supreme Court, the National Congress, and the presidential palace in Brasília on January 8, 2023, in protest against the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The following day, the Brazilian authorities announced that the riots had been fully suppressed, and on January 14, Anderson Torres—Bolsonaro’s former Minister of Justice—was arrested on charges of involvement in the election-denial uprising. The Supreme Court later accepted the prosecutors’ request to open an investigation into Bolsonaro himself for incitement of the unrest.

These groups have also expanded on a solid social base built through the politicization of hate. At the core of the far-right and anti-constitutional forces defending the December 3 insurrection are conservative Protestant organizations that, over the past two decades, have cultivated powerful organizational networks and financial capacity by mobilizing around sexual minority hatred, anti-feminism, and opposition to anti-discrimination legislation. Across regional forums—including those in Chuncheon, Gwangju, and Daejeon—groups opposing queer cultural festivals and the Student Human Rights Ordinance were consistently identified as key actors threatening local democracy. The December 3 insurrection represents the inevitable consequence of these hate-driven forces expanding their reach beyond the social sphere and into the political realm, where they ultimately moved to defend an attempted rebellion.

Therefore, restoring democracy must begin with institutionally blocking the politics of hate that constitute their central source of power.

II. Overview of Institutional Reform Proposals – Four Pillars for Strengthening and Advancing Democracy

1. Basic Direction of the Proposals: Isolating Anti-Constitutional Forces and Advancing Inclusive Democracy

The December 3 insurrection incident revealed that democracy can regress at any moment, elevating the attainment of full resilience to a core national mission for a government grounded in

popular sovereignty. The restoration of democracy envisioned here is not a simple return to the pre-martial-law state. Rather, based on the diagnosis that the December 3 rebellion exposed fragile linkages across the state—spanning the military, prosecutorial and investigative agencies, intelligence institutions, and local administrations—this proposal seeks a structural response. Built on a four-stage framework of truth-finding, accountability, non-recurrence, and reform, the proposals aims to dismantle the political and social bases of the anti-constitutional forces so that they can no longer exert influence within institutional politics. At the same time, it pursues a qualitative transition toward a democracy that is substantively inclusive of all members of society—including sexual and gender minorities, women, and migrants. Accordingly, the foremost responsibility of the newly inaugurated president and government is to carry out reforms that restore the democratic republic endangered by the December 3 insurrection. The first tasks are the complete termination of the insurrection and the strengthening and advancement of democracy.

Especially in the current political landscape—no longer defined as “conservative vs. progressive” but as “constitutional defenders vs. anti-constitutional forces”—a so-called firewall norm that establishes a clear break from extremism is essential for the survival and development of democratic republic under the existing constitutional order. Moreover, cognitive fragmentation such as election-fraud narratives cannot be resolved through institutional reform alone; it requires a reconfiguration of learning, dialogue, and deliberation processes that engage the cognitive system in which knowledge, emotion, and identity intersect. Accordingly, this proposal advances a comprehensive reform agenda structured around the following four pillars.

2. Key Task ① — Restoring the Soundness of the Constitutional Order and Controlling Emergency Powers

(1) Diagnosis: The December 3 insurrection revealed the absence of an effective and immediate automatic check mechanism to restrain an imperial president who abuses constitutional emergency powers—such as martial law and emergency decrees.

(2) Objective: To fundamentally prevent the abuse of presidential emergency powers (martial law and emergency authority) and reestablish the separation of powers, automatic check mechanisms—such as the automatic convening of the National Assembly, mandatory legislative approval, and expedited review by the Constitutional Court—must be explicitly codified in the Constitution and statutory law

3. Key Task ② — Enhancing Representativeness and Accountability in the Political System, and Dismantling the Winner-Take-All Structure

(1) Diagnosis: Structural vulnerabilities inherent in the highly concentrated presidency and the winner-take-all single-member district system—the core arrangements of the 1987 constitutional order—have long been identified. These institutions entrench an extreme two-party system, reproduce regionalism, and distort the public opinion. The recurring phenomenon of “one-party dominance” in local councils such as Busan and Seoul demonstrates how this winner-take-all model has paralyzed democratic oversight at the level of local governance.

(2) Deepening of the Problem: This polarized political structure enables “anti-constitutional forces” to embed themselves to major parties and

push through their extreme agendas.

(3) Objective: Institutional reforms—such as permitting a runoff system, mixed-member proportional representation (MMPR), and regional parties—are required to secure political pluralism and evenly distribute executive power over-concentrated in the presidency.

4. Key Task ③ — Strengthening Civic Capacity and Culture, and Restoring Democracy Education

(1) Diagnosis: The disappearance of democratic civic education in schools was a recurring concern raised in the forums held in Daegu, Chuncheon, and Seoul. The “political neutrality” clause of the Framework Act on Education has been misinterpreted as a blanket prohibition on political education, and even universities lack basic coursework on democracy—revealing the stark barrenness of the current educational environment.

(2) Deepening of the Problem: In a competition-driven education system, young people are deprived of opportunities to learn and discuss democracy, rendering them either politically disengaged or highly vulnerable to extreme and distorted information.

(3) Objective: To strengthen civic capacity, education in practical democracy and media literacy education that foster critical thinking and deliberative skills should be mandated as a core compo-

nent of public education. In parallel, the political speech rights of teachers should be protected to strengthen civic capacity.

5. Key Task ④ — Rebuilding the Public Sphere, Expanding Inclusiveness, and Countering Hate and Conspiracy Theories

(1) Diagnosis: The public sphere—the foundation of democracy—is deteriorating. (a) Hate and discrimination, which function as key drivers of anti-constitutional forces, are framed as “freedom of expression,” thereby justifying violence against minorities (as raised in the Gwangju, Chuncheon, and Seoul forums). (b) Regional media outlets, weakened by economic precarity, have lost their watchdog capacity, while in Seoul even public broadcasting (TBS) has been abolished—directly threatening the public sphere itself. (c) The public sphere has become heavily polluted by explicit false information and conspiracy theories—such as the justification of martial law or claims of electoral frauds—along with color-labeling that distorts historical facts, and hate expression toward minorities.

(2) Objective: A healthy public sphere—one in which all citizens can participate safely—must be restored by legally and institutionally blocking the politics of hate that sustain anti-constitutional forces, establishing platform accountability to disrupt the supply chains of hate speech and conspiracy theories, and enacting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

III. Specific Institutional Reform Measures

1. Investigating the December 3 Insurrection, Punishing Those Responsible, and Controlling Presidential Emergency Powers

To fundamentally prevent a recurrence of the December 3 insurrection, constitutional and statutory amendments must be pursued to decen-

tralize powers that are currently concentrated in the presidency and to establish immediate and effective automatic safeguards against acts that abuse the Constitution.

The recent historical experience—where a Prosecutor General who exercised unchecked prosecutorial power rose to become the leading conservative candidate, was elected president, and ultimately destroyed the constitutional order—while the fervor of the 2016 Gwanghwamun candlelight uprising failed to translate into full-scale institutional reform under the Moon Jae-in administration and instead settled into at the level of “management-based governance,” strongly underscores the need for a popular sovereignty-based government to complete structural reforms that will terminate insurrectionary risks and protect democracy.

a. Proposal ①: Investigating the December 3 Insurrection and Punishing Those Responsible

(1) Current progress: A prerequisite for restoring public confidence in institutional reform is a full-scale truth finding that investigates the December 3 insurrection and punish those responsible. A special prosecutor has been appointed to investigate the insurrection, and charges of general treason have recently been filed against Yoon Suk-yeol and other figures involved. In addition, a “Constitution-Respecting Government Innovation Task Force” has reportedly been established under the Office of the Prime Minister to address insurrection-related remnants within the public office.

(2) Ongoing measures to end the insurrection: Beyond current efforts, a Special Act for Ending the Insurrection (tentative name) should be enacted to allow additional investigations and inquiries, ensure preservation of related records, disqualify insurrection participants from holding

public office, require official apologies from government institutions, and establish safeguards to prevent recurrence. To this end, a Special Investigation Committee for Ending the Insurrection (tentative name) should be formed to determine causes from the structural and systemic perspectives, assign responsibility, and create institutional mechanisms and conditions that guarantee such events cannot occur again.

b. Proposal ②: Controlling Presidential Emergency Powers, Including Martial Law

(1) Strengthening control by the National Assembly: When the president declares martial law or issues emergency decrees, prior approval by the National Assembly should be the default requirement, or at minimum, parliamentary approval must be obtained within 48 hours. If the National Assembly fails to decide within that period, automatic termination of the declaration should be legally mandated.

(2) Stricter conditions for invocation: The conditions for declaring martial law should be substantially narrowed to a clear, present, and grave armed threat, and declarations made for ordinary public security purposes must be strictly prohibited.

(3) Expedited review by the Constitutional Court: A fast-track review mechanism should be established to allow the Constitutional Court to promptly assess the constitutionality and legality of martial law or emergency powers, ensuring that constitutional violations are not prolonged.

c. Proposal ③: Controlling Abuse of Authority by the President and the Government

(1) Reducing presidential powers: Through constitutional amendment discussions, the “head of state” status—widely regarded as a remnant of the Yushin Constitution—should be removed; the

president's emergency powers should be reduced or abolished; and revisions to the Amnesty Act should be pursued to prevent abuse of presidential pardon authority.

(2) Stronger control over the executive branch: The National Assembly Act should be amended to check “rule by enforcement decree” that exceeds statutory delegation. To ensure transparent decision-making, bodies such as the National Security Council (NSC) must be required to keep written minutes as a rule and release them afterward.

(3) Reforming the military intelligence agency: The Defense Counterintelligence Command (DCC), which participated in the insurrection, should be dismantled or reorganized, and democratic oversight must be strengthened across all military intelligence bodies.

(4) Protecting public officials: The duty of soldiers and public officials to disobey unlawful orders should be explicitly codified, and robust safeguards must be established to protect whistleblowers who refuse or report illegal directives.

2. Amendments of Political Relations Laws: Electoral Reform to Reduce Polarization

a. Limitations of the Current Single-Member District System and the Entrenchment of Regionalism

The single-member district system, which constitutes the basis for elections to both National Assembly and local councils, is a winner-take-all structure that selects only one representative per district. Across regional public forums, this system was repeatedly identified as a core factor distorting democratic representation.

As noted in Busan, Daejeon, and Seoul forums, this system enables a candidate to win 100% of

representation with only 50.1% of the vote, while the remaining 49.9% of voters are effectively rendered wasted votes. This leads to severe disproportionality and, ultimately, regional seat monopolization: in Busan, the People Power Party holds 17 of 18 seats; in Daegu, 32 of 33 seats. Gwangju City Council is effectively cemented under single-party dominance, and even the Seoul Metropolitan Council—functioning under overwhelming single-party control—has seen key checks and balances collapse, as demonstrated by the abolition of public broadcaster TBS and the repeal of the Student Human Rights Ordinance.

This structure restricts voter choice and instead intensifies deep-rooted regional cleavages—such as Yeongnam hegemony and Honam marginalization. By virtually shutting smaller parties out of the legislature, it deprives the public sphere of diverse social agendas (e.g., climate, labor, minority rights) and fundamentally erodes citizens' sense of political efficacy.

b. Proposal ①: Introducing Multi-Member Districts and Restoring/Expanding MMPR in National Assembly Elections

To reduce extreme two-party confrontation in the National Assembly and ease regional political divides, the proposal raised at the Busan forum to introduce a multi-member district system merits active consideration. Electing two to four representatives per constituency allows not only the first-place candidate but also second- and third-place candidates to win seats. This provides an institutional foundation for a progressive candidate to gain representation in Daegu and a conservative candidate to do so in Gwangju, offering a practical means of breaking the regional monopolies held by the two major parties.

At the same time, the current electoral system—plagued by controversy over satellite parties—must be reformed to restore and expand MMPR so that the number of seats genuinely reflects vote share. Rather than merely increasing the number of proportional seats at the national level, a regional proportional representation model should be introduced by dividing the country into five to six zones, thereby strengthening the link between regional voter sentiment and party vote share. This would help voters recognize that their ballots will no longer be wasted, enabling support for smaller parties—previously abandoned under single-member districts—to translate into actual representation.

Such electoral reform is essential for overcoming political polarization and building a more diverse and representative democracy. The Election Act should be revised to improve proportionality and representation, alongside lowering the threshold for forming parliamentary negotiation groups to ensure a wider range of voices in the legislature.

c. Proposal ②: Introducing Runoff Voting for Presidential and Local Elections, and Legalizing Regional Parties

To implement genuine democratic local governance, two reforms are proposed.

First, as strongly recommended in the Daejeon forum, runoff voting should be introduced not only for presidential elections, but also for elections for all metropolitan and basic-level local government heads. As seen in Daejeon, mayors elected with only 30–40 percent of the vote often govern unilaterally and exclusively, effectively disabling democratic oversight. This stems from a lack of majority-based legitimacy. Under a runoff voting system, if no candidate wins a majority in the first round, the top two candidates advance to a second round, ensuring that the fi-

nal winner secure support from over half of the electorate. This encourages candidates to build broader policy coalitions, lays ground for cooperative governance, strengthens the democratic legitimacy, and promotes policy-based political alliances.

Second, to reduce the capital-region dominance and revitalize grassroots democracy, regional parties should be legalized. As repeatedly raised in both Daejeon and Busan, the current Political Parties Act—requiring all parties to maintain their head office in the capital, Seoul—is structurally centralist. By abolishing this provision, region-based parties focused on local issues (e.g., the Gadeokdo New Airport, environmental concerns in Daejeon) could be freely formed and operate. Such reform is essential for beyond a Seoul-centric political framework and realizing substantive local self-governance. Amending the law to remove the capital-headquarters requirement is thus necessary to genuinely enable grassroots, region-anchored political organization.

d. Proposal ③: Ensuring Internal Party Democracy, Strengthening Campaign Transparency, and Establishing Inclusive Representation Mechanisms

There is a clear and urgent need to strengthen democracy within political parties. To ensure transparency in party nominations and party charter amendment processes, electronic recording and public disclosure of these processes should be made mandatory. Internal democracy should also be reinforced by revitalizing policy primaries and general party assemblies. Recent issues—such as allegations of Unification Church intervention in internal elections within the People Power Party—reflect how insufficient institutionalization of intra-party democracy has enabled such problem to occur.

In addition, transparency in party-run election campaigns should be improved. One option is to introduce an online political advertising library that publicly discloses the funding sources and targeted audiences of campaign ads, while allowing researchers access to the data for public-interest purposes. This would also enhance transparency throughout the electoral process.

Furthermore, to lower barriers for political minorities, reforms should extend beyond the current zigzag quota for proportional female candidates. A representation index should be developed for diverse minority groups—including youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, and sexual minorities—and tied to party nomination support mechanisms such as subsidies. This would provide procedural guarantees for inclusive representation, while expanding as well as strengthening diversity and democracy within political parties.

3. Amendments to the Framework Act on Education and the Teachers' Status Act — Democratizing Classrooms and Strengthening Democracy Education

a. Limitations of the Current “Politically Neutral” Education and the Harms of Competition-Centered Schooling

The political indifference of younger generations and their vulnerability to extremist narratives—repeatedly identified across nationwide forums—stem from structural failures in the public education system.

As teachers and students testified at the Daegu and Chuncheon forums, and as a university professor confirmed in Seoul, the “political neutrality” clause in the Framework Act on Education is being misapplied in practice as a de facto ban on political education or as justification for avoiding political topics altogether. Fearing accu-

sations of political bias, teachers self-censor to the point that they shy away from teaching even basic democratic processes, such as the structure of the National Assembly or how elections work. The absence of democracy-related courses at the university level further illustrates how barren the landscape of democracy education has become.

As noted in the Chuncheon forum, students are placed in an education system rooted in extreme competition, where peers are viewed not as collaborators but as adversaries to defeat. Raised in a “political clean room” with little opportunity to experience debate, cooperation, conflict, or negotiation—the fundamentals of democracy—young people either fall into political apathy (as seen in Daejeon’s so-called “no-comment city”) or readily absorb simplistic and provocative far-right narratives encountered on YouTube and online communities (e.g., election-fraud claims raised in Busan, or the Everytime forum discourse in Chuncheon) without critical reflection.

b. Proposal ①: Making Democratic Civic Education Mandatory and Expanding Debate- and Cooperation-Based Learning

The sustainability of democracy depends on education. The “political neutrality” clause in the Framework Act on Education and its enforcement decree must be reinterpreted and revised to clearly distinguish political bias and democratic civic education. As proposed in the Chuncheon forum, the current competition-driven education environment—one that frames peers as adversaries—should be eased, and a fundamental shift is needed toward education that teaches justice and cooperation.

To this end, Korean-style democratic civic education that cultivates critical thinking should be made a compulsory subject throughout elementary, middle, and high schools. Such education

should not rely on one-way knowledge transmission, but be delivered through practical, participatory format including debate, negotiation exercises, mock parliamentary sessions, and community-based problem-solving projects.

Democratic civic education should also expand beyond schools to the broader public sphere, including the civil service and military. In particular, constitutional, democracy, and human rights education should be strengthened within the armed forces and police, establishing ethical and ideological foundations enabling personnel to resist unconstitutional commands such as those seen during the December 3 insurrection. Furthermore, a body such as a National Civic Participation Committee (tentative name) should be established to define core principles for civic education, develop curricula and professional instructors, and build a nationwide implementation framework.

c. Proposal ②: Guaranteeing Teachers' Basic Political Rights and Participation in Politics

The fundamental question raised in the Dae-gu and Chuncheon forums—Are teachers citizens?—must be addressed. Teachers who are not allowed to participate in democratic life cannot be expected to cultivate democratic citizens. The obligation of “political neutrality,” imposed solely on teachers like a form of restraint, must be critically reconsidered, as it effectively deprives them of their civil and political rights.

Teachers' core political rights—including party membership, political donations, and the expression of political views—should be guaranteed at a level consistent with OECD standards. Relevant legislation such as the State Public Officials Act, the Political Parties Act, and the Teachers' Union Act should be comprehensively revised to protect teachers' political speech. This is the most fun-

damental precondition for enabling democracy education in the classroom.

4. Revitalizing the Public Sphere and Reforming the Media: Responding to Hate and False Information

a. The Politicization of Hate — The Convergence of Anti-Minority Narratives and Far-Right Forces

The core organizational base of the anti-constitutional forces that defended the December 3 insurrection lies in the conservative Protestant networks, which has accumulated systematic mobilization capacity and substantial financial resources through campaigns such as decades-long anti-North labeling and red-hunting campaigns, now fused with opposition to homosexuality and resistance to anti-discrimination legislation.

These groups have exerted pressure on the political sphere by advancing narratives that merge anti-communist ideology with hate speech—framing slogans such as “pro-North gay” and “homosexual dictatorship law.” This reflects a transformation in ideological censorship: the stigmatizing language of “commie” or “Jusapa,” once used to suppress democratization movements under the condition of national division, has been re-weaponized through modern anti-sexual-minority sentiment. The politicization of hate is not mere rhetoric—it manifests as a concrete threat that erases minority presence and corrodes democratic public space. Examples include Chuncheon's denial of public venues for queer cultural festivals, coordinated anti-LGBTQ mobilization within Christian circles in Gwangju, the “Holy Breakwater” campaign aimed at obstructing queer events in Daejeon, the suppression of disability rights protests in Seoul.

b. Proposal ①: Cutting off the Engine of Hate Politics through Rapid Enactment of a Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law

This proposal elevates the enactment of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law not merely as a policy for minority rights, but as a core democratic defense policy essential to preventing a recurrence of the December 3 insurrection.

The December 3 insurrection was carried out by anti-constitutional forces whose growth and organizational cohesion were fueled by hate politics—rooted in pro-North labeling and hostility against sexual minorities. Since far-right politics, nourished by hate and discrimination, have already culminated in insurrection and violence, the restoration of inclusive democracy—symbolized by the “rainbow-colored, vibrant squares”—must begin with institutionally shutting down the political machinery of hate.

In particular, the core of the far-right mobilization that emerged after December 3 lies in conservative Protestant groups that have built power around anti-homosexuality campaigns and opposition to the anti-discrimination legislation. By combining anti-LGBTQ rhetoric with anti-communist ideology, these groups have turned hate and discrimination into a primary source of political energy undermining democratic order. Therefore, enacting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law (Equality Act) that explicitly bans discrimination and hate is the most urgent task for democratic restoration—one that directly weakens the organizational base and ideological justification of anti-constitutional forces.

Legally prohibiting hate and discrimination—the central source of power—is thus the most effective and fundamental means of cutting off the organizational base and legitimacy of these forces. This marks a shift away from the previ-

ous posture of political passivity, which treated hate as a “controversial issue” or a matter requiring “social consensus,” toward a new paradigm that recognizes hate as an act of democratic destruction. As identified in the Seoul forum, this approach goes beyond a defensive democracy model that merely penalizes hate speech case by case, and instead addresses hate politics structurally within a comprehensive human rights framework.

c. Proposal ②: Media Literacy Education and Stronger Platform Accountability

Media literacy repeatedly raised across regional forums—must be incorporated as a core element of democratic civic education. This is essential because YouTube and other social media platforms have become primary accelerators of far-right narratives, election-fraud conspiracies, and clear historical distortions—such as labeling the Jeju April 3 Incident or the May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement as “riots”—alongside other forms of fake news. Strengthening critical public capacity to recognize and counter such disinformation is therefore a key measure for safeguarding constitutional order. It directly addresses the reality in which young people in Busan come to embrace election fraud-theories through YouTube, and students in Chuncheon internalize far-right rhetoric within anonymous communities like Everytime.

At the same time, as demonstrated by the December 3 insurrection and the Western District Court riot, the dissemination of blatant disinformation and incitement to violence that threaten constitutional order must be understood not as extensions of “freedom of expression,” but as threats to democracy itself. Legal responsibility of digital platforms must be strengthened to disrupt the supply chain of hate and conspiracy content, and the statutory authority of bodies such as the

Korea Media and Communications Commission must be reinforced so they can respond swiftly and firmly to such anti-constitutional content.

d. Proposal ③: Revitalizing Local Public Spheres (Communities) and Introducing Deliberative Democracy

The most pressing issue in Busan and Daejeon is narrow and biased public spheres, while in Seoul the public sphere itself came under repression—for example, through the abolition of the public broadcaster TBS under Mayor Oh Se-hoon. As noted in the Daejeon forum, the vicious cycle in which financially vulnerable local media grow dependent on advertising revenue—thereby losing their capacity for critical oversight and becoming subordinate to local government power or specific ideological interests—must be broken.

To address this, the Local Media Development Fund should be expanded to reinforce the public role of regional news organizations, alongside policies that support independent, public-interest media financed by reader subscriptions rather than advertising. Furthermore, as pointed out in the Seoul forum, steps must be taken to reverse the phenomenon in which civil society became “government-affiliated” through past private-public governance processes—resulting in a loss of autonomy and critical oversight—and to restore and strengthen its independence.

It is also essential to overcome the widespread aversion to political dialogue identified in Daegu and Daejeon. As seen in the “fandom community” proposal from Daegu and book club activities in Daejeon, physical and institutional spaces should be expanded—at both national and local levels—to allow citizens to exchange views safely through shared interests other than politics (community support project).

Beyond simple community support, an active rebuilding of the public sphere is needed through the institutionalization of citizen participation and deliberation. A National Civic Participation Committee (tentative name) should be established to design public deliberation policies on major national issues, and the introduction of a Citizens’ Assembly (tentative name) should be legislated so that citizens can directly participate in deliberation. This approach would help resolve the fragility of local public forums—demonstrated by controversies such as the proposal to erect a Park Chung-hee statue in Daegu—and enable practical participatory democracy in which citizens deliberate and see their conclusions reflected in policy. The cognitive divides such as election-fraud claims, which cannot be addressed by institutional reform alone, indicates the need to redesign systems of learning, discussion, and deliberation that engage the interconnected domains of knowledge, emotion, and identity.

IV. Future Tasks and Reflections

1. Outstanding Tasks: Addressing Economic Inequality and Capital-Centric Concentration

This proposal has focused on urgent political and social institutional reforms needed in the after-

math of the December 3 insurrection. However, forums across the country consistently identified economic inequality and precarious living conditions as the most fundamental soil from which the crisis of democracy has taken root.

The economic foundation sustaining Yeongnam hegemony in Daegu, the outflow of young people due to extreme capital-region concentration, the gender imbalance embedded in the Gwangju-type job model, and the economic frustration experienced by younger generations in Chuncheon and Busan have all served as fertile ground for the rise of far-right populism and hate-based politics. As analyzed in the Seoul forum, The politicization of hate forms the structural backdrop of the democratic crisis—where young people, forced into survival competition under an unequal and unstable socio-economic system, redirect their anger toward vulnerable social groups such as women and immigrants, legitimized through narratives of meritocracy and “fairness.” When democracy fails to reduce inequality and poverty—when it cannot demonstrate the tangible efficacy that “democracy puts food on the table”—anti-constitutional forces inevitably exploit that void.

This challenge also reflects the structural limitations that persisted even after democratization in 1987, in which the conservative party system, authoritarian modes of control, and conglomerates influence remained intact. It is inseparable from the fact that democratization forces failed to build an independent political base, were instead absorbed into existing parties, and could not establish a representative-accountable relationship that genuinely advocated for the socially and economically marginalized.

The full consolidation of democracy cannot be separated from the task of economic democratization—reducing asset inequality, ensuring balanced regional development, and creating decent employment. Where these matters extend beyond the scope of this proposal, they remain among the most essential challenges that a government grounded in popular sovereignty must

address to restore and secure democracy.

2. Role of Civil Society: From Crisis Response to Everyday Democratic Practice

The December 3 insurrection revealed the overwhelming strength and resilience of Korean civil society—its capacity to unite in times of crisis. Yet, as noted in the Busan forum, the critical question now is how this immense energy that once filled the squares can be organized and sustained once people return to their everyday lives.

Going forward, civil society must convert the explosive mobilizing power of the “square” into the practice of democracy in “everyday life.” As raised in the Seoul forum, the challenge is how citizens who once stood in the square can maintain and organize that civic power once they disperse after impeachment. This requires seeking new forms of organization beyond traditional civic groups, illustrated by the case in which teachers—following the Seoi Elementary School teacher’s death—mobilized through online communities, not through labor unions. Civil society must also take an active role in the regional public spheres emphasized in this proposal, evolving from oversight and resistance into agents of everyday, substantive grassroots democracy.

3. Conclusion: Breaking from Constitutional Order Saboteurs and Advancing a Qualitatively Mature Democracy

The constitutional crisis of December 3, 2024 redrew the political line in Korea—not between “conservative vs. progressive,” but between democratic forces that defend the Constitution and anti-democratic forces that deny it. The restoration of democracy must begin not only with holding the self-coup actors accountable, but with a clear rupture from the anti-constitutional forces them-

selves and the hate politics that constitute their social base and principal source of power. Progressives, moderates, and constitution-respecting rational conservatives must stand together within this framework. The four reform pillars presented in his proposal—control of emergency powers, political system reform, democratic civic education, and reconstruction of the public sphere—should function simultaneously as a defensive barrier preventing any recurrence of the December 3 insurrection and as the foundation upon which Korean democracy can move beyond the limitations of the 1987 system into a deeper, broader, and more inclusive stage of maturity.

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