



# Elections Ensuring Prevention of the Spread of the Coronavirus, Setting a New Paradigm



With the spread of COVID-19, the Korean government responded to the epidemic by emphasizing social distancing to prevent infection among people. As the parliamentary election on April 15th loomed, discussions took place to find ways of preventing infections in crowded polling areas. In order to ensure more voters can cast ballots in a safe environment, additional safety measures were invented based on the existing voting method.

## 01 Birth of “Election While Avoiding the Risk of Infection”

The National Election Commission was greatly concerned about the overlapping of the coronavirus and the parliamentary elections. As it decided that the existing election method would inevitably lead to the spread of the COVID-19, the Commission created a new mode of casting ballots, aiming to halt the spread of the coronavirus. As a result, there was a higher voter turnout rate than usual despite the strong social distancing rules, and there was not a single case of infection due to the election. Let us look into the new election method.

### ① Preparation of Voters on Election Day

Previously, voters used to visit polling stations only with ID cards. However, on the April 15th parliamentary elections, the government developed rules and procedures for voting and publicized the measures so that people could be familiar with the new voting method. Voters brought masks and ID cards on Election Day.

#### <Rules and procedures for voters>



1. Bring ID card to polling stations
2. Do not bring young children to polling stations, if possible.
3. Wash hands for at least 30 seconds with running water before going to the polling station
4. Wear masks
5. Have your temperature taken at the entrance of polling stations, disinfect hands with hand sanitizers, and wear plastic gloves
6. Stand at least 1 meter apart from other voters in and out of the polling stations
7. Refrain from doing unnecessary chatting in and out of the polling stations
8. Lower masks for a moment for identity confirmation inside the polling stations
9. Voters with a fever and other symptoms can cast ballots at separate polling areas and after casting a ballot, visit a community health center
10. Wash hands with running water for over 30 seconds after returning home

## ② Preparation Prior to Entering a Polling Station

Voters had their temperature measured at the entrance of polling stations. If a fever or respiratory symptoms were not detected, they disinfected their hands, wore plastic gloves, and entered the polling station. However, if voters were found to have a fever or respiratory symptoms, election staff guided them to a separate polling area and directed them to the community health centers after casting their vote. Signs were marked on the bottom of the floors of polling stations to have voters stand at least one meter apart.

## ③ Casting Ballots

Voters that entered polling stations received voting slips after identity checks under the guidance of election officials and moved to the polling booths. After marking the slips, they put the slips into the voting boxes and left the station, which was the same procedure as previous elections. Polling staff frequently disinfected devices and spaces inside the polling stations touched by voters to prevent any possible infections.

# 02 People in Self-quarantine Were Allowed Out to Participate in Voting

The National Election Commission checked whether voters in self-quarantine wished to cast ballots to exercise their voting rights. Those who indicated a wish to vote, if they did not have a fever or respiratory symptoms on Election Day, were allowed to go to the polling station to vote.

However, the participation was restricted to those with less than a 30-minute commute from a place of self-quarantine to a polling station, using a personal vehicle or by walking. The use of mass transit was prohibited because the use of mass transportation could increase exposure to the coronavirus.

Voters in self-quarantine were permitted to cast ballots after 18:00 when the voting of ordinary voters without symptoms ended. Voters in self-quarantine who were permitted to go out for voting went to polling stations while strictly observing personal hygienic rules (wearing masks, etc.).

### Guidelines for voters in self-quarantine

- Those with a fever or symptoms prior to going out cannot participate in voting
- Notify polling stations of departure, using a self-quarantine smartphone application
- Wear masks before they leaving home and never take them off except for when identity confirmation is needed
- Keep GPS of your smartphone turned on while moving to the polling station
- Do not have chats or contact with others while moving to the polling station
- Voters in self-quarantine must stand at least two meters apart at the polling station and avoid any talks or contact with others

On Election Day, voters in self-quarantine arrived at waiting places to cast their ballots following the instructions of the staff. The staff checked names of voters against the voter register and received numbered tickets on their behalf and guided them to a separate voting area designated for voters in self-quarantine. The procedure of casting ballots at separate voting areas was the same as polling stations, but just to prevent infection, polling booths were disinfected for every voter.

