

To overseas Koreans: ‘We would appreciate your interest in current issues, such as dual citizenship’

Pledge to ‘listen to compatriot voices and treat them as policy partners’

With the inauguration of President Lee Jae Myung, Korean Americans expressed great expectations for the new president, calling on him to unite the country domestically, strengthen the U.S.-South Korea alliance and resolve tariff issues.

“The impeachment and the political vacuum that followed have divided Korea, and I hope that President Lee Jae Myung will begin to heal the country,” said Steve Kang, chair of the Board of Public Works in Los Angeles, which is home to the largest Korean American community in the United States.

“Even after President Trump took office in the U.S. (in January), there was no leadership in South Korea, so there was no communication between the leaders, and I hope that President Lee Jae Myung will actively engage in dialogue with the U.S. side to further strengthen the U.S.-South Korea alliance,” Kang added.

“I know that negotiations on the tariff issue have also been delayed, and there are concerns about the economic impact on South Korea, but as large companies have made many investment promises in the U.S. and have laid a good foundation, if President Lee Jae Myung visits the White House and makes an active appeal, we can find a win-win solution. Above all, it is urgent and necessary for the leaders of the U.S. and South Korea to communicate with each other.”

Strengthen U.S.-South Korea alliance, resolve tariffs

Lee Myung-seok, president of the Korean American Association of Greater New York, said, “I hope President Lee Jae Myung will work to strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, and the Korean American community will also play a role in this process.

“Overseas Koreans have contributed to Korea’s economic development by sending large amounts of remittances to their home countries, but it is unfortunate that the perception of Korean Americans in Korea has



President Lee Jae Myung (5th from L, back row) poses for a photo with leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) and invited countries at the G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada, on June 17.

not been very good in recent years,” Lee continued. “I hope you will pay attention to current issues, such as the rights of Korean Americans and the issue of dual citizenship.

“It is very unfortunate for Korean Americans that we are living in a disorienting time when the country and people are unable to unite and are divided,” said Ahn Soo-hwa, president of the Korean Association of Maryland. “I hope that the situation in our homeland will be resolved so that we can live in this country with pride and dignity.”

Choi Kyung-shin (57), who owns a restaurant business near Washington, D.C., said: “My friends and relatives in Korea are particularly worried about the U.S. tariffs. I hope that President Lee will meet with President Trump as soon as possible and come up with a good solution.

“The political turmoil in South Korea also made the Korean American community uneasy, and I hope that President Lee can bring about social stability and unity,” Choi added.

Listen to the voices of Korean diaspora

There have been calls for the president to listen more closely to the voices of the Korean American community and strengthen cooperation with compatriot

First lady Kim Hea Kyung (R), who is visiting Canada with President Lee Jae Myung for the G7 Summit, greets the Western Canadian compatriot community at a dialogue with the Calgary Korean Association on June 17.



communities.

"We should treat the Korean diaspora in the U.S. as policy partners, not just manage and control them according to our political interests," said Kim Dong-seok, president of the Korean American Grassroots Conference (KAGC). "We shouldn't see compatriots as routes to political power, and even if Korean politics is divided, we should encourage the diaspora to unite in the U.S. to form one community."

Even as Koreans living in the United States, we are eager to see our homeland become better and always have good things," said Robert Ahn, president of the Korean American Federation of Los Angeles. "I hope that the hearts of the overseas Koreans who voted seeking new hope will be conveyed to the president.

"I sincerely hope that he will listen to the voices of the people, the voices of the field and the voices of our overseas Koreans, and that he will be remembered as a president who will leave office five years from now with everyone's respect," Ahn added.

Steve Lee, president of the Korean American Community Association of Greater Washington, said, "With a long history of immigration, the Korean community in the U.S. has become more second-generation and more centered on American life, but we are still Korean. I hope the government can give us direction on how we can be more helpful and closer to Korea."

Continued interest and support for Korean language education

"I still want people to understand that we and our children are going to live in the United States in the future," Lee said. "Jews who have adapted well to American society say, 'We are Jews, but let's be Jews in America,' and we need to find ways to be Koreans in America. If the government helps us, we will be able to do more for Korea, and that will ultimately help our diaspora community and our country."

"With the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Cuba in 2024, the first Sejong Academy was opened in the capital city of Havana," said Jeong Ho-hyun, director of the Sejong Academy in Havana, Cuba. "I feel that when Korea is democratic and stable, Korean language education in foreign countries becomes more vibrant and naturally raises the country's profile.

"I would like to ask President Lee to continue his interest and support for Korean language education and learners so that we can establish Korea as a proud nation in the world," he said.

Expectations are also growing among the Korean diaspora for the introduction of a mail-in voting system for overseas Koreans, which was included in the presidential campaign. The Korean diaspora has been raising concerns about the current system, which makes it difficult for them to participate in voting, but no clear solution has yet been found.

"Improving the overseas voting system, including the introduction of postal voting, will result in significant budgetary savings," said Kim Jum-bae, president of the United Korean Association in Africa and Middle East. The idea is to reduce the cost and administrative burden of the existing overseas voting methods (such as in-person voting at diplomatic missions) and make it more convenient for more overseas Koreans to participate in voting. Kim emphasized that such improvements will ensure that overseas Koreans' right to vote is practically guaranteed and that the national budget can be spent more efficiently.

Kwak Sang-yeol, co-chair of the Overseas Korean Voters Organization, also emphasized, "Overseas Koreans' demand for the guarantee of basic rights under the Constitution is a natural right."

He pointed out that although the right to vote is a fundamental right stipulated in the Constitution, the current system, which makes it difficult for overseas Koreans to participate in voting, limits their ability to exercise their right in practice, and expressed the need to improve the system, such as introducing a postal voting system. 장