

Lee-dership after all

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Democratic Party's convention outcome



Source: Yonhap News

Without any surprise, **Lee Jae-myung was reelected to a second term as leader of the Democratic Party (DP)** at the party's national convention on 18 August with an overwhelming 85.4% of the vote, reconfirming his strong political influence often phrased as “Lee-dership anyway (Lee is the leader anyway)”. This is the **first time a party leader has been reelected** under a DP affiliated party since former President Kim Dae-jung was reelected in the early 2000s. During his campaign, **Lee emphasized his main policy, “livelihood-ism,”** and laid out his blueprint for governance to address public livelihood, such as the cost of living, as his first and foremost policy agenda, solidifying his public image as the next prominent presidential candidate of the largest opposition party.



Along with the party leader election, **the new supreme members of the DP were also elected**, namely NA members Kim Min-seok, Jeon Hyun-heui, Han Jun-ho, Kim Byeong-ju, and Lee Un-ju, who each received 18.23%, 15.88%, 14.14%, 13.08%, and 12.30% respectively.

Supreme member Kim Min-seok, who now has been rising as the “Lee’s choice,” struggled in the early stages of the contest, but after Lee hinted at his support for Kim in a YouTube broadcast, saying, “Why aren’t the (Kim’s) votes coming in”, Kim took the lead and has held it since 3 August. Other supreme members Jeon Hyun-heui, Han Jun-ho, Kim Byeong-ju, Lee Un-ju, are all known to be pro-Lee and will support Lee’s second term.

On During the campaign, Lee presented **his political vision by promoting the symbolic phrase, “livelihood-ism,”** to the forefront. “The Democratic Party must solve the problems of people’s livelihoods that the government and the ruling party have neglected,” he said, accentuating that “the problem is the economy.” “Livelihood-ism should be the only ideology that the party focuses,” said Lee, emphasizing the term as a keyword in every campaign speech.

Lee’s pragmatism is seen as a calculated move to capture centrist voters, who are principal to the next presidential election in 2027, and to steer the political landscape. In his party leadership acceptance speech, Lee pledged to “take care of the people’s lives,” offering to meet President Yoon Suk-yeol for a bilateral meeting, as well as his ruling party counterpart Han Dong-hoon for a representative meeting, respectively, aiming to take control of the political dialogue and promoting his idea of ‘saving livelihood.’

Lee is likely to come up with a message on government’s tax reform, aimed at the centrists as well. He has already signaled his willingness to soften various tax policies, including the financial investment income tax and the comprehensive real estate tax. “We need to discuss difficult livelihood issues, especially ways to overcome the prolonged domestic demand slump,” said Lee, reiterating the need for the *Special Act on Livelihood Restoration Cash Assistance* – which would pay out 250,000 KRW stimulus checks to every Korean – a bill that Yoon previously vetoed.

Lee’s agenda – “livelihood-ism”

PPP completes leadership reshuffle

As People Power Party (PPP) leader Han Dong-hoon has finalized key party appointments and completed the formation of his leadership team. Experts analyze that **Han's control over the party is solidifying** as he has now secured a majority support at the PPP Supreme Council by **placing his close associates in key positions**.

On 2 August, Han appointed NA member Kim Sang-hoon as the successor to former PPP Policy Committee Chairperson Jeong Jeom-sig, meaning that out of the nine members, Han himself, supreme members Jang Dong-hyeok, Jin Jong-oh, and Kim Jong-hyeok, and the new Policy Committee's Chairperson Kim Sang-hoon, accounted for five of the nine members, securing a majority.

In addition, the remaining key party positions, including the Director of the Yeouido Institute (the PPP's policy institute), the Chairperson of the party's Central Ethics Committee, and the Head of the Public Relations Department under the General Secretariat, were filled, completing the Han leadership with a deeper policy and political color.



Source: Yonhap News

First high-level ruling party- government committee with Han

Han attended a policy coordination meeting with the Yoon administration, discussing national issues with Prime Minister Han Duck-soo and Chief of Staff Chung Jin-suk from the Office of President. This was the first such meeting since Han took office last month.

At the meeting, the party, the government, and the Office of the President discussed a wide range of national issues. Agenda reportedly discussed included **securing vaccines**

and responding to the recent spread of COVID-19, and strengthening quarantine protocol for MPOX (formerly known as monkeypox), which was recently declared an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). It was decided to hold further party consultations on electric vehicle fire issues and Chuseok (also known as the Korean Thanksgiving Day) price control measures to address demand-driven inflation.

As it is not easy for PPP to take the initiative in legislation while the opposition party holds a majority in the NA, it is expected to focus on party communication and respond to current issues with widespread public support, such as measures regarding electric vehicle fires. PPP Floor Leader Choo Kyung-ho accordingly suggested prioritizing discussing the public welfare bills in each standing committee first, moving such bipartisan agenda forward.

DP and PPP agree to cooperate on bipartisan legislation



Source: The Hankyoreh

The DP has continued its 'partisan offensive' using its parliamentary majority, but the bill remains in limbo following a Yoon veto. The only way to get past the plenary session of the NA and the president's veto is a consensus between the ruling and opposition parties, which is essential for the bill to pass. Given such context, the DP also likely finds itself in need of some level of inter-party consensus.

The DP first opened the door that they can pass non-controversial bills such as the *Nursing Act*, the *Goo Hara Act* (preventing a parent's claim on children's assets when having neglected their parental duties), and the *Charter Fraud Victim Assistance Act*. Meanwhile, the PPP suggests that the two parties must immediately organize a joint consultative committee to discuss public welfare reform bills, including the *K-Chips Act*, the *AI Act*, the abolition of the Financial Investment Income Tax (Gilt Tax), the easing of the Comprehensive Real Estate Tax (Estate Tax), inheritance tax reformation, and labor, education, and pension reform. It is of utmost importance to monitor the progress of the ruling and opposition parties' consultations.

In line with this initiative, two major party leaders, Han and Lee, are set to hold a bilateral talk at the National Assembly on the afternoon of 25 August. Lee proposed the talk during



his party leadership acceptance speech, an offer which Han subsequently accepted.

The PPP will reportedly propose a declaration of cessation of political strife, political reforms, and restoration of public welfare as its agenda. PPP has also accepted the DP-presented agenda regarding *the Corporal Chae Special Counsel Act*, the 250,000 KRW stimulus package and the revival of the district party*, with a stance of welcoming an 'open and frank discussion'. It would be critical to pay attention to whether the meeting on 25 August will become the starting point for **breaking the political bottleneck at the legislative body**.

* A district party is a subsidiary organization of a political party's local branch, led by a chairperson for each parliamentary constituency. It manages party members and communicates voter opinions to the party headquarters.

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