

DLP Gears up for Regional Elections

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Less than 60 days are left until voters go to the polls to elect their local politicians on May 31st. In an election that will decide 3867 seats at the governor/mayor(16), city council(733), district mayor(230), and district council(2888) levels, the DLP has been engaged in preparations since late last year and are in the final stages before launching its election campaign.

With over 600 candidates that have completed internal election processes and more expected to join them in the coming weeks, the DLP expects to field about 700 candidates in total. Over one-third of the party's candidates are women. Of the 16 regional governor and mayor posts, 13 will be contested by DLP members.

In the test for the Seoul mayor post, party members selected the 35 year old Kim Jong Cheol over former party president Kim Hye-Kyung in a close internal vote. A former spokesperson for the party, Kim Jong Cheol has vowed to advocate the values of democratic socialism in the race that will gather the most attention during the election campaign. Busan University Professor Kim Suk-Joon is running for the second time in Busan, where he received close to 17% of the vote in the last election for mayor, in 2002. Kim Sung-Jin, currently a member of the national party leadership, is already on the campaign trail in Incheon, and has polled as high as 15% in recent opinion polls. Current party President Moon Sung-Hyun will be running for the governor spot in the South Gyeongsang province, where he spent most of his adult life in the labor movement. In Gyeonggi, the second most populous province of the country, Kim Yong-Han is running for the party and has made the expansion of the Pyeong-Taek U.S. military base a central issue in his campaign. Internal party elections are still on-going in Ulsan, where the party is seeking to make-up for its narrow defeat in 2002. An experienced teacher and trade-unionist, Ms Noh Ok-Hei and former party General Secretary Mr Kim Chang-Hyun are vying for the party ticket in this industrial city. Mr. Lee Yeon Jae is leading the party's candidates in the city of Daejeon, as is Mr. Oh Byung Yun in the historical city of Kwangju. Mr. Lee Yong-Ghil and Mr. Yun Kyung Suk are running for governor in the provinces of South Chungcheong and North Jeolla, respectively. Three other candidates for the governor/mayor slot will be decided in the next couple weeks.

The last regional election in 2002 was a breakthrough for the party, as it gained 8.1% of the vote across the nation, making it the third political force in the nation in just its 3rd year of existence. The DLP hopes to build on that success at this year's elections. As in 2002, seats will be allotted to the proportional representation(PR) vote. The PR system has been expanded to the district council level, although at a limited scale, which will also help the party's chances for election. All DLP candidates will be given the number 4 slot on the vote, regardless of the constituency.