

# KIPEC : Legislative updates from the National Assembly of Korea – February 2025



## Key Legislation Passed in February

In February, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, led by Speaker Woo Won-shik, passed a total of 93 bills.

### Special Act on the Expansion of the National Backbone Power Grid

The enacted legislation requires the government to take the lead in quickly expanding transmission and substation facilities. It also establishes special provisions for compensation and support to minimize opposition from local communities during the process. Power generation facilities are concentrated in regions such as Yeongnam(Southeastern part), Honam(Southwestern part), and Chungcheong(Central-western part) in South Korea. Meanwhile, power consumption is heavily centered in the capital area, where high-tech industrial facilities are located. This has led to ongoing challenges in expanding long-distance transmission lines and conflicts with local residents over power grid construction. In response, the enacted legislation mandates the government to establish and implement a National Backbone Power Grid Expansion Master Plan every five years and to create a National Backbone Power Grid Expansion Committee under the Prime Minister's office.

### The Myung Tae-kyun Special Prosecutor Act

The law establishes the appointment and duties of an independent special prosecutor to investigate illegal election interference and state affairs manipulation related to Myung Tae-kyun. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is tasked with recommending two candidates for special prosecutor to the President, who will then appoint one of them. If the President does not appoint a special prosecutor within three days of receiving the recommendations, the older of the two candidates will automatically be appointed. The investigation focuses on allegations of illegal election interference, such as falsified public opinion polls and vote trading, during the 8th local elections, the 2022 by-elections, the 22nd National Assembly elections, and other elections. It also covers suspicions of unlawful activities involving Myung Tae-kyun and individuals connected to candidate Yoon Suk-yeol, including providing free polling services in exchange for influence over candidate nominations and other privileges.

### Partial Amendment Bill of the Tax Exemption and Limitation Act

To promote investment in semiconductor facilities, the tax credit rate for integrated investment tax reductions has been increased by 5 percentage points: from 15% to 20% for large and medium-sized enterprises, and from 25% to 30% for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The tax credit period for R&D in new growth, core, and national strategic technologies has been extended by five years, from the end of 2024 to the end of 2029. Exceptionally, the credit for semiconductor R&D has been extended for seven years, until the end of 2031. The artificial intelligence (AI) and next-generation transportation systems have also been included as national strategic technologies. This legislation was introduced in response to the intensifying global competition, including the CHIPS Act, highlighting the need for tax support to the semiconductor and advanced technology industries.

### Special Act on the Management of High-Level Radioactive Waste

This legislation stipulates the establishment and operation of facilities to safely manage spent nuclear fuel(high-level radioactive waste). It is based on the projection that the temporary storage for spent nuclear fuel at nuclear power plants will gradually reach capacity, starting with the Gori and Hanbit plants in 2031. The legislation mandates the creation of facilities for safe disposal and permanent isolation of spent nuclear fuel, along with support plans for the host regions.

## Major News from the National Assembly of South Korea – February

### Feb 6th

The Special Committee on Investigation and Victim Relief for **the December 29 Aircraft Disaster** convened a meeting to investigate the incident and received status reports from three agencies, including the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport.

### Feb 7th

Speaker **Woo Won-shik** met with Chinese President **Xi Jinping** at the Taiyangdao Hotel in Harbin to discuss the agenda for the upcoming **APEC Summit** in Gyeongju.

### Feb 10th

**Lee Jae-myung**, leader of the Democratic Party of Korea, emphasized the need to pass a supplementary budget of around **30 trillion won (approximately 22.8 billion USD)** in his speech at the National Assembly. He also proposed the introduction of a four-day workweek and a system where citizens can recall their lawmakers.

### Feb 11th

**Kwon Seong-dong**, floor leader of the People Power Party, called for a **supplementary budget** to revitalize the domestic economy and proposed a constitutional amendment to rebalance power between the president and the National Assembly in his speech.

### Feb 12th

The National Assembly conducted a **three-day questioning session** to the government.

### Feb 14th

In a plenary session led by the opposition Democratic Party of Korea, the National Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the appointment of **Ma Eun-hyeok** as a **Constitutional Court judge**.

### Feb 18th

The **Education Committee** held a plenary session to question Education Minister **Lee Ju-ho** and Daejeon Education Superintendent **Seol Dong-ho** regarding the murder of elementary school student **Kim Ha-neul** in Daejeon.

### Feb 20th

The first **National Assembly-Government Policy Council Meeting** was held.

The **Environment and Labor Committee** conducted an inquiry into current issues, focusing on workplace bullying raised by the death of MBC weathercaster **Oh Yo-anna**.

### Feb 21st

The Special Committee for the National Investigation into the Domestic Uprising Charges through the Declaration of Martial Law by the **Yoon Seok-yeol** Administration held a plenary session and issued arrest warrants for **President Yoon** and former Minister of Defense **Kim Yong-hyun**.

### National Assembly Strengthens Parliamentary Diplomacy Through a Special Delegation

On February 3, National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik met in his office with the Special Delegation to the U.S., which included Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) lawmakers Chung Dong-young, Kim Young-ho, and Wi Sung-lac, as well as People Power Party (PPP) lawmakers Cho Kyoung-tae and Bae June-young. He also met with the Special Delegation to Europe, comprising DPK lawmakers Han Jeong-ae, Kwon Chil-seung, and Park Sang-hyuk, along with PPP lawmakers Yoo Sang-bum and Kim Mi-ae.

During the meetings, Speaker Woo entrusted the delegation with delivering official letters to key global leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump, Vice President James David Vance, and Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Mike Johnson. The letters were also addressed to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the Speakers of both Houses of the UK Parliament, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Parliament, and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Speaker Woo urged the Special Delegation to the U.S. to convey South Korea and its National Assembly's unwavering commitment to the ROK-U.S. alliance, emphasizing the importance of continued economic growth and prosperity for businesses in both nations under the new administration. He also asked the delegation to extend his deepest condolences for the aviation accident that occurred in Washington, D.C., in January.

### Speaker Woo Won-shik Meets with interim acting U.S. ambassador to South Korea Joseph Yun

On the morning of the 18th, Speaker Woo Won-shik met with Acting U.S. Ambassador Joseph Yun to discuss the outcomes of his recent visit to China and ways to enhance ROK-U.S. cooperation. Speaker Woo stated that during his visit, he reached a broad consensus with top Chinese leaders on advancing ROK-China relations and discussed President Xi Jinping's potential visit to South Korea for this year's APEC Summit. He also highlighted the importance of ROK-U.S. cooperation in diplomacy and economic affairs, emphasizing the need to address Korean businesses' concerns following the launch of the new U.S. administration.

### First National Assembly-Government Policy Council Meeting

The National Policy Council meeting was held on February 20 at Sarangjae in the National Assembly, bringing together representatives from the ruling and opposition parties, as well as the government and the National Assembly, for a four-way dialogue. Among the attendees were National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik, Acting President and Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, PPP Emergency Committee Chairman Kwon Young-se, and DPK Leader Lee Jae-myung.

During the discussions, participants reached a consensus on the necessity of drafting a supplementary budget. They committed to explore concrete measures based on three core principles: supporting livelihoods of people, fostering emerging industries such as artificial intelligence (AI), and enhancing trade policies. Although a finalized agreement was not reached, setting foundational principles for further deliberation was regarded as a meaningful step toward common ground.

### Ruling and Opposition Parties Agree to Form Four Special Committees, including Pension Reform Committee

On the 26th, the ruling and opposition parties agreed to establish four special committees in the National Assembly, including the Special Committee on Pension Reform. The parametric reform of the National Pension System, particularly adjustment to the contribution rate and income replacement rate, will be further discussed at the upcoming National Assembly-Government Policy Council Meeting, with the aim of reaching a conclusion within two days. PPP Floor Leader Kwon Seong-dong and DPK Floor Leader Park Chan-dae reached this agreement during a meeting presided over by Speaker Woo Won-shik. While both parties agreed on raising the national pension contribution rate from the current 9% to 13%, they remain divided on the income replacement rate, which currently stands at 40%. The PPP is advocating for an income replacement rate of 42-43%, while the DPK is pushing for 44-45%. In addition, both parties agreed to establish three more special committees: the APEC Special Committee, the Special Committee on Climate Crisis Response, and the Special Committee on Ethics.