

PPP Neutralizes Vote to Impeach South Korea's President

Monday 9 December 2024, by [SHIN Mitch](#) (Date first published: 8 December 2024).

With the ruling party holding a meeting to avoid the vote, the National Assembly was short of a quorum.

On December 7, South Korea's ruling People Power Party (PPP) succeeded in preventing South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol from being impeached over his short-lived declaration of martial law.

Just 195 out of the 300 lawmakers cast their ballots, meaning the votes could not even be counted due to the lack of a quorum. At least 200 lawmakers must vote on a bill impeaching the president.

The 108 PPP lawmakers attended the plenary session on December 7 to vote on a separate bill calling for a special prosecutor to investigate stock manipulation allegations against Yoon's wife. The bill failed by two votes, with 198 of 300 lawmakers voting for the bill. (More than 200 lawmakers would have to vote for the bill to pass it.)

Most of the PPP legislature then left the plenary chamber right after voting on the special prosecutor bill. Only Ahn Cheol-soo, a senior PPP lawmaker, kept his seat until he cast his vote on the bill seeking to impeach Yoon. Later, two other PPP legislators appeared to vote, but the other 105 PPP lawmakers never showed up at the plenary chamber.

According to local media reports, the PPP lawmakers moved to attend a party meeting right after they cast their ballots on the bill calling for a special prosecutor to investigate Yoon's wife. As the PPP lawmakers had to leave the plenary chamber to participate in the party meeting, lawmakers with the main opposition Democratic Party argued that it was a machination to automatically kill the impeachment bill by preventing a quorum. And the tactic succeeded.

Woo Won-shik, the speaker of the National Assembly, suspended the voting process when the PPP lawmakers left the plenary chamber and urged them to return to vote. At 9:26 p.m. KST - about three hours after he tabled the bill - Woo ended the plenary meeting. He expressed his deepest regret toward the PPP lawmakers who ignored his repeated requests to return to the plenary chamber to cast their ballots.

Hours before the National Assembly opened the plenary session, Yoon gave a public address for the first time since he showed up in a televised announcement to lift martial law at 4:30 a.m. KST on December 4.

Apologizing to the people who were surprised by his sudden declaration of martial law, Yoon said he would not "evade legal and political responsibility" over the declaration during his 110-minute address. He also vowed not to call a second declaration of martial law.

However, the opposition has already lost all trust in Yoon, as it has been confirmed that he [intended to arrest many political figures](#) during martial law, nearly all of them members of the opposition parties. Also, South Koreans are skeptical of how the police and prosecutors can fairly investigate the sitting president's allegations of insurrection.

To sustain his presidency, Yoon signaled that he would depute authority over the remainder of his term, which under normal circumstances would last until 2027. Yoon promised to hand statesmanship to the ruling party; however he did not specify how he would do so. It's believed that Yoon made the offer because Han Dong-hoon, the leader of the PPP, had said in a party meeting a day before the vote that it is necessary to suspend Yoon from his duties. Yoon may have sensed the possibility of some PPP lawmakers agreeing with Han and voting to impeach him.

Minutes after Yoon's address, Han told reporters that Yoon's early departure from office is inevitable, showing he had not changed his position since his remarks on December 6. However, Han - who does not hold a seat in the National Assembly - apparently did not have the ability to enforce his will within the party, as the impeachment bill has been killed due to the lack of a quorum.

Earlier on December 7, Park Chan-dae, the floor leader of the DP, said in a party meeting that his party will propose a bill to impeach Yoon again, which could happen three or four days later - the earliest date for a second impeachment attempt. Lee Jae-myung, the DP's leader, who was a contender against Yoon in the 2022 presidential election, reiterated that the party will keep proposing bills to impeach Yoon unless he resigns.

As the PPP resorted to legislative chicanery to protect the president, frustration and anger were clearly visible among citizens who were protesting in front of the entrance of the National Assembly and on the streets in Gwanghwamun, Seoul.

Mitch Shin

P.S.

- The Diplomat. December 08, 2024:
<https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/ppp-neutralizes-vote-to-impeach-south-koreas-president/>