

Koreans in US both anxious, optimistic over Trump's return

2024-11-08 : 22:26



Volunteers with the Asian Americans Advancing Justice offer voting assistance and interpreter help outside the polls at the Lucky Shoals Park Recreation Center in Norcross, Ga., Tuesday. AFP-Yonhap

By Jane Han

SEATTLE — After one of the most unpredictable elections in the U.S. came to an end Tuesday (local time), Koreans across the country woke up to news that Donald Trump has clinched a stunning comeback to become U.S. president once again.

As news sinks in of the returning president, disappointment and fear are met with optimism and a sense of relief for many Koreans living in America.

“I wasn’t a Trump supporter and I’m still not,” said Koo Min-hee, 42, who lives in Washington, one of the most democratic and liberal states. “But being fed up with failed Democratic policies pushed me to vote for the Republican Party this time.”

This is a common sentiment shared by many people who opted to vote for Trump in this election.

Still-high grocery prices and excessive emphasis on LGBTQ rights and transgender health care policies, among other reasons, have driven Korean Democrat supporters to the other side.

“The Democratic Party had four years,” said Park Min-kyu, 53, who runs a small business in California, another Democratic stronghold “They didn't do anything to make our everyday lives better. I have to worry more about robbers breaking into my store day and night because the crime rate has gone up all around here.”

Despite the optimism some manage to find in Trump's return to the White House, many are largely worried and anxious that racism will be fueled again in all areas of society.

“I don't understand how minorities can vote for Trump after they've been through four years of Trump's presidency. Have they forgotten what he's done?” said Chloe Kim, 28, a graduate student in New Jersey.

Not long after the first string of COVID-19 cases surfaced in 2020, Trump has repeatedly called the disease the “China virus,” which triggered a rise of anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes against Asians in the U.S.

“Trump voters only seem to care about money. They don't seem to care at all that he is a convicted felon. It's truly shocking and disappointing,” Kim added.

Paul Choi, 33, another New Jersey resident, agreed. “You know what's more shocking? The fact that people voted for Trump even after knowing exactly what he did and what he's going to do. We've been through him, yet people still voted for him. I've lost hope in people.”

Leaders of various Korean American organizations spoke up in reaction to the election results.

“We have two and a half months left before a new administration and Congress take power,” said Sookyung Oh, executive director of Hamkae Center, a grassroots organization advocating for Asian Americans in Virginia.

“Our job now is to prepare and organize. Together with our community members, we will protect our Asian American and immigrant communities, stop Trump, make progress in our communities and gather strength for the years ahead,” she stressed. “The challenges ahead will only be overcome if we come together as one.”

Kim Jung-woo, co-director of National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC), a national advocacy group, said, “Together, we'll fight against policies and inflammatory rhetoric that violate our human rights, and we will protect and support our communities.”

Jane Han writes as a freelance correspondent for The Korea Times.