

Codifying Digital Transparency and Rapid-Response Mechanisms to Counter Foreign Influence and Election Cognitive Warfare

Dear Rep. Shin Sung-bum and your office team,

My name is Hanmin Oh. I currently conduct research on cognitive warfare and foreign influence at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), and through the Irwin Cotler Institute Fellowship Program I focus on how democracies can protect electoral integrity and public trust.

While South Korea's election process is institutionally mature, the online environment has enabled influence operations that combine funding, proxy service providers, platforms, and coordinated networks at speed and scale. The challenge is that if the system responds only after individual incidents occur—and in a fragmented way—public trust in election outcomes is often damaged before the integrity of the process can even be assessed. In my view, the central task is not censorship or broad restrictions on speech, but rather (1) making the origins, costs, and distribution dynamics of political messaging more transparent, and (2) codifying clear procedures that allow rapid, lawful coordination among responsible institutions during election periods.

With that in mind, I would like to submit the following legislative package concept based on a “minimum intrusion–maximum transparency” principle (working title).

- 1. Standardizing transparency for online political advertising**
Require standardized disclosure of key information for online political ads—such as sponsor/advertiser identity, spend, run dates, core targeting criteria, and reach/impressions—and establish a legal basis for a publicly accessible political ad library (archive). This approach strengthens voters' right to know without directly restricting lawful expression.
- 2. Registration and labeling of “foreign influence activities” (scope open for discussion)**
Consider a mechanism requiring registration and clear labeling when foreign governments, parties, or their agents materially engage in domestic opinion shaping or political processes, subject to defined thresholds. The intent is not to ban content, but to enable voters to evaluate messages with knowledge of their provenance and underlying interests.
- 3. Platform transparency reporting and codified lawful data-request procedures**
Encourage or require regular platform transparency reporting related to organized manipulation (e.g., coordinated inauthentic networks, synchronized narrative amplification), and codify procedures under which the National Election Commission and relevant authorities may request and verify necessary information within a clearly bounded framework (legal basis, scope, documentation, and ex post oversight). Clear rules help both platforms and government actors avoid arbitrary decision-making and accountability gaps.

4. Legal foundation for an election-period joint response mechanism

Create statutory authority for an election-period “joint situation room/hotline” coordination mechanism, enabling structured information-sharing, reporting intake, rapid verification, and pre-defined response protocols among the National Election Commission, relevant ministries, security/investigative bodies, and platforms. This is a preventive, procedure-based posture rather than ad hoc crisis management after the fact.

This proposal is not intended to advantage any political side. It is aimed at updating the rules of the game for the digital era in order to safeguard electoral fairness and, critically, public confidence in outcomes. I would be grateful if your office could review this concept, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how it could be designed conservatively with respect to constitutional rights, enforcement scope, and institutional responsibilities.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hanmin Oh

Irwin Cotler Institute Fellowship