



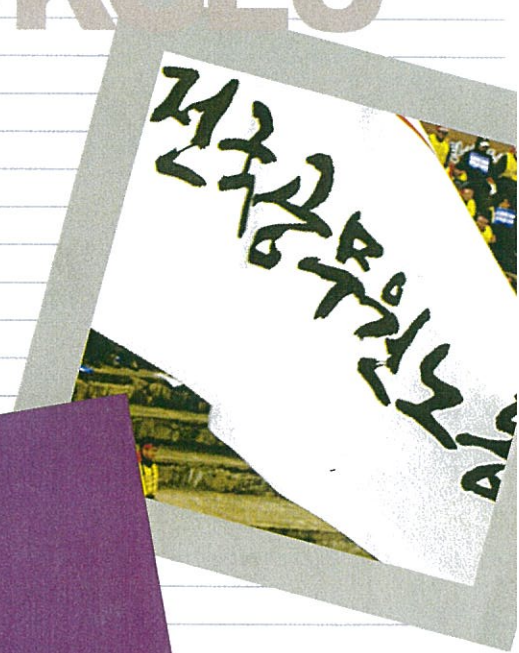
Korean Government Employees' Union

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Struggle History of KGEU



1999~the Present

Table of Contents

2	Platform
	2010 KGEU Declaration to the people for a social responsibility KGEU always will be with the people!
4	Brief History of KGEU
5	Organisation structure
6	History of KGEU 1996~1999 Before the Birth of the first KGEU
7	History of KGEU 1999~2002 Establishment of Federation of Work Councils and Transition to Trade Union
8	History of KGEU 2002~2004 The Establishment of the first KGEU and Struggle for Its Legalisation
8~9	History of KGEU 2004~2006 • Declaration for political Freedom in 2004 • General Strike against Flawed Legislation Regarding Government Employees' Union
10	History of KGEU 2006~2008 The Enforcement of the Act on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Unions and Forced Legalisation
11	History of KGEU 2008~2009 Continued Repression after Legalisation
12	2009~the Present • Unification of Government Employees' Unions and Affiliation with KCTU • Refusal of Register Korean Government Employees' Union as a Legal Union • Repression on Human Rights by the Lee Government • Civil Servants for Citizens, and KGEU Together with Peoples
15	Disciplinary action status



We shall eradicate the bureaucratism and graft and corruption of civil services to build a new democratic and clean civil services that earns the trust and confidence of the people.

We shall endeavour to bring about improvement in the conditions of work and enhancement in the political, economic, and social status of the workers in the civil service.

We shall build on the history and tradition of the independent and democratic trade union movement and realise the full basic trade union rights.

We shall engage in solidarity with all forces within and without the country to consolidate democracy and world peace.

We shall work towards the national independence, democracy, peace, and reunification of the divided country.

We shall work towards the eradication of inequality in the society and the realisation of human dignity of all people.

2010 KGEU Declaration to the people for a social responsibility KGEU always will be with the people!

- ① ... We shall Being 'civil servants of the people' under any circumstances
- ② ... We shall eradicate corruption in public offices by remaining strictly political neutrality on local elections
- ③ ... We shall resolve wrong convention in public offices and eradicate corruption by internal self-purification movement
- ④ ... We shall strengthen surveillance activities on the National Assembly and public sectors' administration as an internal watchdog in public offices
- ⑤ ... We shall endeavour to revitalise community involvement programs
- ⑥ ... We shall endeavour to increase ordinary budget and to enhance general welfare
- ⑦ ... We shall arrange a certain amount of union budget for the ordinary people and the poor
- ⑧ ... We shall endeavour to increase administration staffs and to fulfill active administration for the people
- ⑨ ... We shall endeavour to reinforce public interests and administration
- ⑩ ... We shall establish policies for the people, which is based on field officials' opinions



1999 Korean Association of Government Employees' Work Councils

2000 Korean Research Association of Government Employees' Work Councils for Development

•Struggle against retrogressive revision of government Employees' Annuity

2001 Alliance of Korean Government Employees' Work Councils (AKGEWC)

•2001.3.24 Establishment of AKGEWU at Seoul National Univ.
•2001.10. Trade Union preparation team to KGEU

2002
2004
2005
2006 Korean Government Employees' Union (first KGEU)

Committee for Korean Court Government Employees' Union

•2002.3.23 Inaugural National Congress of KGEU at Korea Univ.
•2002.11.4 Annual leave strike to gain basic labour rights : Withdrawal of Public Officials Association Act
•2003.10.6-18 National relay grand march for basic labour rights : Withdrawal of Public Officials Trade Union Act

2007
2008 Korean Government Employees' Union

Korean Democratic Government Employees' Union

Korean Court Government Employees' Union

•KGEU divided two by repression and internal conflicts
•2007.6.23 Establishment of Korean Democratic Government Employees' Union (KDGEU)
•2007.12 Organisation unification committee for integration of government employees' unions
•2008.9.10 Holding a mass rally of 50,000 union members from each government employees' union
•2009.6.3 Agreement with KGEU, KDGEU and KCGEU for integration
•2009.9.12-22 Ballot 3 unions' members on affiliation with KCTU and integration of 3 unions

2010 Korean Unified Government Employees' Union (KUGEU)
Korean Government Employees' Union (KGEU)

•2009.9.26 1st National Congress of KUGEU
•2009.11.17-18 Ballot on first KUGEU leadership by direct vote : Yang, Sung-yun, and Ra, Il-ha elected for President and GS
•2009.11.28 2nd National Congress of KUGEU : Election on vice president, president of accounting, audit committee
•2010.2.23-24 Ballot on revising union name to KGEU
•2010.3.20 Holding a mass rally for celebrating 8th anniversary of establishment

National Congress



Secretariat			
Management support	Policy plan & Bargaining	Organising	External Relations
General affairs	Policy planning	Organising	Solidarity Activities
Finance		Reinforce organising	
Secretariat	Bargaining	Organising Unorganised	International Relations
Information & Communication		Organising Women	
Education & Publicity	Legal affair team	Spokesperson	Welfare works
Education			
Publicity			

19 Branches and 211 Chapters

Regional Branches			
Branch	Chapter	Branch	Chapter
Seoul	23	Daegu Gyeongbuk	17
Gyeonggi	15	Jeonnam	14
Incheon	6	Jeonbuk	6
Gangwon	13	Gwangju	4
Chungbuk	10	Ulsan	5
Chungnam	11	Busan	15
Gyeonanam	16	Jeju	3

Occupational Branches	
Branch	Chapter
Central Administrative Organs	8
Educational Administrative Organs	7
University Administrative Organs	12
National Assembly Administrative Organs	2
Courts Administrative Organs	24



1996~1999

Before the Birth of the first KGEU

Government employees are workers for sure, and they deserve basic labour rights, which are guaranteed workers.

The ILO Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) emphasizes that all workers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have basic labour rights, and the ILO has stressed several times that government employees should be considered as workers.

However, workers in Korea, not to mention government employees, have long been denied their basic labour rights, and the struggle for these rights is still ongoing in the nation. The Pro-democracy Movement in 1987 brought an end to Korea's military dictatorship, and along with this, workers took to the street to fight for their rights and to build democratic trade unions.

The labour movement resulted in the birth of the national center of trade unions, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), which helps to promote the solidarity of workers. However, basic labour rights were not guaranteed government employees, not even the basic right to organise.

Despite these disappointing consequences, government employees in Korea began to stand up for their rights, as the global trends turned in favour of protecting rights for government employees, the Korean society quickly became democratised, and labour movement in Korea was strengthened.

In the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the Korean labour movement managed to make a social consensus on the legalisation of trade unions of government employees and teachers, unfortunately, in the expense of accepting the legislation of redundancy dismissal. As a result, Korean Teachers' Union was legalised, and the Act on Formation and Operation of Korean Association of Government Employees' Work Council entered into force in 1999.

In accordance with the Act, work councils were formed at many levels of government offices. Even though work councils were just consultation bodies, not trade unions, they were of significant importance and brought a big change to the circle of government employees because they were the first organisation to represent government employees.

1999~2002

Establishment of Federation of Work Councils and Transition to Trade Union

Establishing work councils, government employees' consciousness for building their own organisation had grown further. Even though laws banned the formation of an association of the work councils, public employees organised the Congress of Korean Government Employees' Work Councils in order to over-come limitations caused by fragmented organisational structure in June 1999.

On February 19, 2000, the Korean Research Association of Government Employees' Work Councils for the Development (KRAGEWCD) was formed, which was a national association in a sense. KRAGEWCD, which had had twelve co-presidents, needed to transform into a more integrated organisation, as it underwent the struggle against the deterioration of the government Employees Pension scheme in 2000.

Therefore, on March 24, 2001, Alliance of Korean Government Employees' Work Councils (AKGEWC) was established, which had a single governing body and unified leadership. In March 2001, one year after its establishment, AKGEWC decided to take steps to turn itself to a trade union to overcome the limitation of work councils and to pressure the government to recognise government employees' union.

Back then, work councils rapidly turned into trade unions in preparation for institutional changes that were expected to affect government employees, including the revision of the Government Employees Pension scheme as well as the differentiated payment of performance bonuses. This massive transformation was possible because officials running work councils realised the need of national association of employees organisations, not work councils of individual offices, and therefore trade unions.





2002~2004

The Establishment of the first KGEU and Struggle for Its Legalisation

Korean Government Employees' Union (first KGEU) was formed on March 23, 2002. The police raided its foundation ceremony and arrested more than 200 members of this non-statutory union. The establishment of first KGEU marked a start of a new chapter in the history of the Korean labour movement. The first KGEU faced draconian repression by the government but its members did not give up their determination to make a united organisation. It was before laws regarding government employees' union were enacted that the non-statutory union was established.

Therefore, the relations between the first KGEU and the government fell into an all-out confrontation. The conflict was amplified, as the two parties disagreed upon what the government employees' union act, which would be regulated labour relations between the two parties, should look like. Influenced by the establishment of the first KGEU, the government put forward a bill for regulating government employees' union, not trade union, before the National Assembly in October 2002.

In response, 3,000 union members went on a strike by using annual leave in November, showing their will against the bill. As a result, the government cancelled the bill, and government employees' labour rights became a social issue during the following presidential election.

2004~2006

Declaration for political Freedom in 2004

When the second leadership of the first KGEU was inaugurated in 2004, the opposition political parties had impeached then President Roh Moo-hyeon and a general election was about to take place on April 15.

In a representatives' meeting, the first KGEU claimed the political freedom of government employees and issued a directive to its members with regard to the general election.

The union endorsed the Korean Democratic Labour Party(KDLP) because the presence of the KDLP in the legislative body would help eliminate irregularities of government employees, reform government offices and guarantee government employees basic labour rights.

The government responded to the move by putting key the first KGEU leaders on the wanted list, arresting them, and taking them to court on charge of violating the Public Officials Act and Public Officials Election Act.

The declaration for the political freedom of government employees, however, gained public attention. Moreover, the first KGEU's endorsement play a significant role in the KDLP's making into the National Assembly, having the union known to the public.

2004~2006

General Strike against Flawed Legislation Regarding Government Employees' Union

In the meantime, the Roh government carried forward to establish an act governing government employees' union in the form of a special act. The bill proposed by the government denied government employees right to collective action, curbed right to collective bargaining by limiting negotiable agenda narrowly, and put strict restrictions on the eligibility for union membership.

The first KGEU argued that the draft bill would curb government employees labour rights rather than guarantee them, and posed struggle against the proposal. The union also demanded the government establish a law in accordance with global labor standards.

Therefore, the government and the first KGEU confronted each other over the contents of the act. Meanwhile, the first KGEU balloted members on whether to stage a general strike to call for three basic labour rights guaranteed by general trade union laws, not by any special act, on May 22, 2003. In August 2004, the government made an announcement of the Act on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Unions(draft) and put forward the bill before the National Assembly.

The first KGEU staged an all-out struggle against the bill. The struggle culminated in the general strike, which began on November 15, 2004. The strike was supposed to last for an indefinite time but actually called off only three days later because of the government's tough measures to interrupt it, including putting the union leadership on the wanted list and blocking strike participants from coming to Seoul. Consequently, massive disciplinary measures for the leadership and strike participants followed (1,500+ disciplined, including 34 arrested and 393 dismissed).





2006~2008

The Enforcement of the Act on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Unions and Forced Legalisation

Despite the opposition from the KGEU, the special bill on government employees' union proposed by the government (the Act on the Establishment and Operation of Government Employees' Unions, etc.) was passed in the National Assembly on December 31, 2004, and entered into force in 2006. The special act had many poisonous provisions because its legislation was conducted without enough consultation with government employees' organisations, including the outlawed first KGEU.

In this sense, the current problems and confusion were expected at that time. After the act entered into effect in 2006, the government began brutal oppression against the non-statutory first KGEU. The government issued the "Directive to Promote the Transformation of Illegal Organisations into Legal Unions (Voluntary Withdrawal of Membership)," and forced the first KGEU to turn into a legal union.

The leadership faced severe discipline and the first KGEU offices were closed down. The government forced union members to withdraw from the first KGEU, and compelled government offices to follow the directive. If not, they were given administrative and financial disadvantages. Closing down of first KGEU offices around the country led to intensive confrontation. Along with this, the government forced government employees to submit pledges to withdraw from the union and not to join unions, who the Act defined were not eligible. These government employees include employees of fifth grade and higher, employees of sixth grade or lower who are working at certain offices. Massive repression against the first KGEU by the government ruined the organisation. The number of the first KGEU members, which surpassed the 140,000 mark in January 2006, was halved (based on union dues paid) by January 2007 due to the government's military campaign-like repression and following internal disputes.

On the other hand, internal conflicts over the future direction of the union with regard to the legalisation of it erupted in the second half of 2006. As a result, in June 2007, the first KGEU was split into two organisations: the Korean Democratic Government Employees' Union and the first KGEU. The two unions submitted their notice of establishment to the government under the current laws in July and November, respectively.

2008~2009

Continued Repression after Legalisation

Even though government employees' unions were legalised, the government's attempt to curb their labour rights gained momentum with the inauguration of the current Lee government.

In 2008, the Lee government established the "2008 Plan to Eliminate Illegal Practices of Public Officials' Organisations," of which main targets included full-time union officials and union membership eligibility. Under the plan, each government office was given official documents with regard to membership eligibility and other standards. Individual union members would face disciplinary measures and legal punishments, unions would be refused talks and negotiation, and government offices would undergo administrative and financial disadvantages if they did not follow the instructions. Each office supervisor was required to monitor related activities and report to the government.

In 2009, the government issued "2009 Plan to Eliminate Illegal Practices of Public Officials' Organisations," under which the administration disciplined and accused union officials, gave disadvantages, and forced government offices to set and report detailed implementation plans on their own. The government monitored the progress of the plan's implementation on the part of each office quarterly in cooperation with the Labor Ministry and Board of Audit and Inspection. In this process, the government violated relevant laws to reduce union membership eligibility, trampling on the right to organise of government employees.

It is very problematic that the government puts restriction on joining unions, coaxes to abandon membership, and gives disadvantages to those who refuse to follow its instructions. The employer of government employees, the government, is now repressing basic activities of government employees' union by issuing various directives and plans, which act as an obstacle to joining the union.

The ILO has recommended that the government correct the situation. In its March 2009 report, the ILO recommended that the Korean government 1) ensure government employees at all grades have the right to form their own associations to defend their interests; 2) enable workers and employers to conduct free and voluntary negotiations with regard to the resolution of the payment of wages by employers to full-time union officials; 3) ensure in the case of negotiations with unions of government employees, the autonomy of the bargaining parties is fully guaranteed; 4) ensure the consequences of policy and management decisions as they relate to the conditions of employment of government employees are not excluded from negotiations with government employees' unions; 5) ensure government employees' unions have the possibility to express their views publicly on the wider economic and social policy questions which have a direct impact on their members' interests; and 6) reconsider the dismissals of the first KGEU members (353th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association, March 2009).

2009~the Present



Unification of Government Employees' Unions and Affiliation with KCTU

Since the split of government employees' union in 2007, organisations had continued to put efforts to promote the unity and integration of government employees as a whole even though conflicts and confrontation among them continued.

As a result, a joint organisation encompassing government employees' unions was formed, and joint protests were organised twice in May and November. Leveraging this experience, the Korean Government Employees Union (first KGEU), the Korean Democratic Government Employees Union (KDGEU) and the Korean Court Government Employees' Union agreed to merge themselves into the Korean Unified Government Employees' Union (KUGEU) on June 3, 2009.

The KUGEU balloted its entire members on the approval of the merger and affiliation with the KCTU, and 90.0% voted for the merger while 66.1% for the affiliation. Then, the government disallowed government employees to vote in relation to union matters during work hours in order to interfere with the unification of the unions and to prevent the unified union from joining the KCTU. The government even condemned the union for joining the KCTU.

Refusal of Register Korean Government Employees' Union as sa Legal Union

Korean Unified Government Employees' Union was established by the general ballot of its all members, and the first representatives' meeting was held on September 26, 2009 to set union rules. On November 17~18 union members directly elected the first president and secretary general. Also KUGEU renamed itself as the Korean Government Employees' Union (KGEU) as before division from November 28 2009.

However, the government returned an application for the registration of the union, which was submitted on December 1, on the grounds that it had not held the general union members' meeting. Thus, the union held a general ballot to establish organisation rules on February 23~24, 2010, and then re-submitted an application.



The government, however, refused the registration again because dismissed workers and management office holders were held its membership. The government's move actually nullified the reporting-based registration of trade unions, and constituted "previous authorisation," which is banned by the Constitution and the ILO convention No. 87.

Afterwards, the government denied the non-statutory "union in progress," and declared it was an illegal organisation in March 2010, prohibiting every activity and event of the union. Authorities closed down chapter offices, halted collective bargaining, terminated existing collective agreements, restricted check-offs, ordered full-time union officials to return their original positions, and blocked access to the website of the union.

The government is now even engaged in plots to force union chapters of the Central Election Management Committee and other central administrative organs to sever relationships with KGEU. The government is also conducting unfair labour practices against the union, reprimanding union officials, and interfering with the union's legitimate activities.

Repression on Human Rights by the Lee Government

The current Lee administration is unprecedentedly tramping on basic labour rights of government employees. Freedom of politics and expression, and freedom of assembly and association have particularly been damaged. In June 2009,

KGEU prepared for issuing a public address on current social situations along with other numerous organisations. The Lee government defined the address illegal and announced to discipline related figures if the KGEU went on it. Therefore, the union put an ad in newspapers, not issuing public address. The ad read, "We want to become civil servants of the people, not of the government." However, the government began processes to discipline 105 union officials, including its executive committee members, branch heads and chapter heads.

As of October 2010, 57 have been reprimanded, including 14 dismissed employees. Following this case, the government continued to oppress the union with various measures, even including some silly measures. For example, the government prohibited government employees from singing the "March for the martyrs," ritual a song that symbolises the prodemocracy movement in Korea, and blocked access of government offices to the KGEU website.



Moreover, 97 KGEU members are now involved in disciplinary measures, including dismissal, for they provide the KDLP with financial support, and the rallies that the KGEU has organised have been illegalised by the government on the grounds that the union is non-statutory. As such, the police blockaded the establishment ceremony on March 20, 2010, and tried to discipline all the participants. Now 18 union officials are under disciplinary process, and some of them are faced with the possibility of dismissal.

The government issued an official instruction that prohibited government employees from participating in the 30th anniversary ceremony of the Gwangju Pro-democracy Movement, which is even designated as a national holiday. As the government took pictures of the participants to use them as evidence for accusation, all of KGEU members attending the ceremony put on masks. The government even revised laws to forbid government employees' unions to oppose policies of the central and local governments. KGEU is struggling against the government's repression on human rights and the freedom of politics and expression.

The union is in step with other civil and labour organisations to protect democracy and basic rights of citizens.

Civil Servants for Citizens, and KGEU Together with Peoples

The mandate of KGEU is to reform the public society from the bottom up, which has been infected by bureaucracy and irregularities. Government employees are now helping to reduce irregularities and corruptions and to improve conventional practices.

KGEU is engaged in various practices to reform administrative services to serve the people. As executors' of the government policies, the members are committed to promoting internal criticism against illegitimate government policies to cater to people, not to the power circle.

Even though it is now denied right to organise, KGEU will overcome any obstacle to move forward and become an organisation respected by its members and people as well.

Disciplinary action status

Progress of criminal and administrative trials proceedings related to the newspaper advertisement - "We want to become civil servants of the people" on 13th July, 2009- and a National Rally - "Restoring Democracy and Improving People's Livelihood" on 19th July, 2009

Criminal trial status

- The prosecution summoned 16 subject to criminal charges.
- : 14 cases being charged without detention and 2 cases being acquitted as of 5th October 2010.

Disciplinary action status

- 58 cases being decided disciplinary measure
 - : 17 cases being closed with salary reduced from 1month to 3months
 - : 14 cases being closed with dismissal
 - : 11 cases being closed with reprimand
 - : 11 cases being closed with suspension from 1month to 3months
 - : 2 cases being closed with demotion
 - : 3 cases being closed with expulsion
- 43 cases being closed without disciplinary action
 - : 33 cases being closed with a warning at disciplinary committees
 - : 10 cases being closed without a disciplinary resolution
- 2 cases being closed with a warning at an entreaty
- 1 case hasn't been requested on a disciplinary resolution

3.20 Establishment ceremony of KGEU

(As of 3rd September 2010)

- 10 cases being closed with deferred
- 6 cases being closed without disciplinary measures
- 1 case being closed with demotion
- 1 case being closed with suspension for 3months

Political Activities related to Korean Democratic Labor Party (as of 17th September, 2010)

- 34 cases being closed with deferred
- 30 cases haven't been decided yet
- 15 cases being deferred till to the final ruling
- 11 cases being closed with deferred till to the 1st trial
- 6 cases being on the 1st Administrative litigation
- 1 case fined on the 1st trial, and has lodged an appeal

