

S.Korea lifts ban on Internet for electioneering

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This file illustration photo shows a busy traffic intersection in Seoul. South Korea's election watchdog on Friday lifted a ban using Twitter and other social networking sites for campaigning ahead of key polls later this year.

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The National Election Commission's move came after the Constitutional Court last month condemned the ban as unconstitutional as it eliminated

"economic and fair" means of campaigning, the Internet and [social networking](#) sites.

"Electioneering by the Internet, emails and social networking sites (SNS) are now allowed," the commission said in a statement.

"Those who are allowed to engage in campaigning can use Internet homepages including portal sites and blogs, as well as emails, mobile messengers, [Twitter](#) and other SNS," it said.

The decision was seen as a blow to the ruling conservative Grand National Party as young voters, frequent users of the Internet and [social networking sites](#), tend to support opposition candidates.

South Korea will hold parliamentary elections in April and a presidential poll in December.

During a mayoral election in Seoul in October last year, young voters chatting through networking sites encouraged colleagues and friends to go to the polls and cast their ballots en masse. The [election](#) was won by an opposition-backed candidate.

Activist groups welcomed the decision.

"The move marks a major step forward in terms of voters' freedom of expression on the Internet," 52 leftist civic groups, including the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, said in a joint statement.

But the Citizens United for Better Society of the conservative bloc said safeguards should be set up in a bid to prevent the spread of slander and false information ahead of this year's major elections.

[South Korea](#) is one of the world's most wired countries, boasting a large

population of smartphone and high-speed Internet users.

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