

A Fruitful Exploration of Developing Local Democracy



Study Times recently published an article entitled "Democratic Earnest Deliberation: where people participated to discuss important city planning issues - the people of Wenling City, Zegou Township participated in a 2005 city planning, money allotment and project decisions" (See Issue 308, Page 5) and introduced the experiment held at Zegou Township, Wenling City. Zegou Township carried out the Democratic Earnest Deliberation for the entire township. This experiment serves as an example for further investigation into public consultation and democratic deliberation.

In the overall Chinese democratic project, local democracy at urban and rural areas constitutes the most important place. Since the inception of more open channels of communication, China has improved democratic institutions including the National People's Congress, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee and minorities-self governing system on the one hand, and strengthened local democratic consultation on the other hand. Right now, China has already developed rural village committees, residential committees, and business enterprise and workers' representative assemblies as the main ways of seeking public consultations. In these institutions, people can participate and have democratic elections, make democratic decisions, and carry out democratic oversight. Such methods have already become ways for many people to participate democratically.

The basic forms of democracy began in the 20th century, mainly in the 1980s. The push for village elections began in the 1990s and caught more of people's attention. Since then, the village elections have become an integral part of village democracy. In late 2004, China has already created 644,000 rural village committees. In China, many of these villages have already experienced five to six elections. The Chinese government recently released "China's White Paper on Political Democratic Building" pointed out that "out of China's 1.3 billion, about 800 million are in rural villages. In order to increase the democratic ways of China's villages, the villagers need to have a voice and exercise their own rights in their own villages - this is the greatest question in developing village democracy. Through years of research, the Chinese government and its villagers have found a solution, and that is to give villagers a voice in government and exercise self-governing rights."

Indeed, there has been success in the current forms of local democracy, but at the same time, there needs to be more improvement. The methods of local democracy need to be improved, and the scope and level of political participation need to be improved. "The Sixteen Party's Congress set up a plan to develop the comfortable society and explicitly said that "the basic democratic developments need to be more well-rounded" and "the basic democratic developments need to be more broad." "China's White Paper on Political Democratic Building" stressed that "increasing basic levels of democracy will adhere to China's traditions and the future developments of China." The fifth meeting of "The Sixteen Party Congress" further developed guidelines for new rural villages and increased community development projects, the need for these developments are high and should be addressed soon. The experiment carried out in Wenling City, Zegou Township provided an example of how to strengthen the developments of democratic deliberation and consultation.

Study Times

www.studytimes.com.cn

Published December 12, 2005 (Translated)