

# The Mechanism of Distributing Special Grants in the Korean 19<sup>th</sup> National Assembly

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**Abstract**— Existing studies on special grants have depended on the material of 17th National Assembly, since the Ministry of the Interior has prohibited disclosure of special grants. Those studies fail to comprehend the dynamics during the process of allocating the special local tax, because they did not differentiate the ruling party from the opposing party. However, it is expected that there would be significant differences between the ruling party and the opposing party in terms of how they distribute special grants. Therefore, this study explores the differences using the material of 19th National Assembly. The finding revealed that the special local tax was distributed unequally between the ruling and opposition districts in 2015. There is a political implication of this study in pointing out that the special grant tax is a representative case showing that competition for re-election in 2015 is unfair.

**Keywords**— 19<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, Political Distribution, Pork-barrel Politics, Special Grants.

## I. INTRODUCTION

By reviewing the data of special grant tax in 2015, the purpose of this study is to analyze the mechanism of how the budget of the 19th National Assembly is distributed. Due to the confidentiality of special grant tax data, there is a lack of research on how the mechanism of resource allocation changes. Nevertheless, there is a need for research in that the special grant tax shows the way political incentives are distributed (Heo and Kwon, 2009). If the special grant tax is not distributed fairly in demographic and financial terms, it can be said that it is deteriorating fairness in political competition, therefore, research on special grant tax will be needed in the future to confirm fair distribution of special grants (Choi and Lee, 2011). It is also necessary to pay attention to the special grant tax so as not to distort the purpose of the special grant tax system to provide services to the people regardless of the financial condition of the region.

According to the existing studies, whether or not the members of the National Assembly belong to the Security and Public Administration Committee, seniority, the number of members of the National Assembly in districts, and the number of the members of the ruling party were found to have significant effects on the allocation of the special grant tax (Choi and Kim, 2008; Heo and Kwon, 2009; Kim, 2010; Choi and Lee, 2011;

You and Cho, 2014). Then, whether distribution of special grants is affected by these factors has to be verified in 19th National Assembly. This is because there have been various situational changes between the 17th National Assembly and the 19th National Assembly.

Using the 2015 special grant tax data released by the Ministry of the Interior, this study investigates the political mechanism of resource allocation, and same independent and dependent variable are used as past research in order to compare with the results of Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009). The composition of this paper is as follows. Firstly, hypotheses will be established considering the existing research and theoretical discussion and the situation in 2015. Secondly, the variables and data for conducting the analysis will be explained. Thirdly, an OLS regression analysis will be conducted to see if the hypotheses are appropriate. Lastly, this study will conclude with some points to be supplemented in future studies.

## II. HYPOTHESES

According to the rent-seeking theory, lawmakers are willing to provide favorable legislation to interest groups and electorate. To meet this goal of lawmakers, there needs to be a fellow bureaucrat who will give his support to his legislation in parliament and a compliant bureaucracy that will enforce the bill as intended by the legislature (Choi and Kim, 2008). According to Weingast and Marshall (1988), parliament creates an organization called the standing committee to solve this problem and establishes a committee with members who have interests in the activities of the committee. Therefore, in the case of the districts represented by the members of the Security and Public Administration Committee, which is the standing committee that has jurisdiction over the special grant tax affairs, there is a possibility that the special grant tax is allocated relatively higher than the districts represented by the members of the other standing committees. According to existing research, it is supported by the fact that many special grant taxes have been allocated to the districts represented by members of the Security and Public Administration Committee (Choi and Kim, 2008; Heo and Kwon, 2009; Choi and Lee, 2011; You and Cho, 2014).

However, if a party was in the ruling party in the 18th and 19th Congress, it is expected that opposition lawmakers will have limited means of distributing special grant taxes. Therefore, it seems that the members of the opposition party who belong to the Security and Public Administration

Committee responsible for the special grant tax affairs received more special grants than opposition members belonging to other standing committees. According to Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009), ruling party lawmakers can maintain close relationships with the heavyweight and the president. On the other hand, there is a limit to the mobilization of individual elements in the case of opposition lawmakers. In particular, a party has been in the seat of the ruling party for about 10 years, if these condition is favorable for the ruling party members to receive the special grant tax, it is expected that opposition lawmakers will have limited resources available to them for allocating many special grants to their districts. Affiliation of the Security and Public Administration Committee is expected to be one of the limited resources available to opposition lawmakers for several reasons.

Firstly, members of ruling party have intimate relationship with the Minister of the Interior, and this environment makes it advantageous for ruling party lawmakers to mobilize special grant taxes. In the 18th and 19th National Assembly, the same party became the majority party and the ruling party. Therefore, as Suktae Kim (2001) pointed out, the discretion of the Minister of the Interior appointed by the president is likely to intervene in the allocation of special grant taxes. According to Yontae Choi and Sangheon Kim (2008), the special grant tax is allocated to the local government at the discretion of the Minister of the Interior. It is predicted that it will be easier to allocate the special grant tax to his district if he is a member of the ruling party who has intimate relationship with the Minister and the president. Also, from 2008 to 2015, covering 18th and 19th National Assembly, four out of six people belong to the ruling party. Jongseop Jeong, Jeongbok You, Hyunggyu Maeng, Dalgon Lee belonged to the Saenuri party before or after taking the minister except for Byungkyu Kang and Sehoon Won. Taking this into consideration, their post-ministerial political goals are likely to have impacts in deciding on the allocation of special grant tax for ministers wishing to be nominated in future elections. Since the next general election is one year away, the competition to allocate special grants seems to be fierce regardless of ruling party and opposition party. However, the fact that there was a significant difference in the amount of special taxation for local districts represented by the ruling party and the opposition party would be evidence that ruling party lawmakers are advantageous in mobilizing special grant taxes.

Secondly, the Standing Committee is a legitimate means for lawmakers to receive special grant taxes for their districts. According to Junpyo Jeong (2014), the role and function of the standing committee became very important as the adoption of a system operated by a standing committee from the 6th National Assembly. For instance, the legislation proposed by the Standing Committee is passed at a high rate in the plenary session. The Standing Committee also has the authority to monitor executives in jurisdictions. Even if the opposition party is relatively less resource-efficient than the ruling party in allocating the special grant tax to its district, it seems that members of the Security and Public Administration Committee

will be able to draw more special grant taxes than the opposition lawmakers belonging to other standing committees.

Therefore, since the standing committee is one of the limited resources mobilized by opposition lawmakers, the districts represented by the opposition lawmakers belonging to the Security and Public Administration Committee will be allocated the special grants more than the districts represented by opposition lawmakers belonging to other committees. On the other hand, according to the study of Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009), ruling party lawmakers will be able to mobilize more special grant taxes to their districts through other networks than the standing committee because they can build up intimate relations with bureaucrats and the president.

Hypothesis 1. If the district is represented by opposition lawmakers belong to the Security and Public Administration Committee, it is likely that they will be allocated more resources than other districts.

For lawmakers with high seniority, they are eligible to be elected chairman of the Security and Public Administration Committee. Also, other senior officers also require high seniority. Therefore, if the district is represented by a lawmaker with high seniority, it is expected to receive more special allocation tax in 2015. Fiorina and Noll (1978) also argue that the seniority of parliamentarians is an important factor in forming a cooperative relationship between bureaucrats and parliamentarians in resolving local civil complaints. Arnold (1979) also argues that senior officials and lawmakers are pursuing their own interests through public expenditure. If administrative bureaucrats have a positive impact on the re-election of a parliamentarian in the region by having the pork barrel budget allocated to a particular area, local lawmakers support the budget associated with the ministry, then political transactions are made.

This can be applied to a centralized political system in South Korea, which has a large impact on local finance through the local fiscal adjustment system. The minister of Interior will make it easier to allocate the special grant tax for the local business to the area of the members of the parliament related to the interests of the Ministry of Interior. Then, parliamentarians may be less likely to criticize the Ministry of Interior or the minister's responsibilities in the audit of state affairs in return for assisting their re-election (Kim, 2001). The seniority that the Saenuri Party lawmakers have accumulated over the last 10 years as a ruling party seems to have had a positive impact on the intimacy with government officials. In fact, many of the ruling party members with high seniorities have held the four positions (the head of the party, the secretary general, the president, the speaker of the National Assembly, and the deputy chairman of the National Assembly), and it can be inferred that their relationship with the president and bureaucracy had a positive impact on the allocation of special grant taxes to their districts. In a previous study of the 17th National Assembly, it was hypothesized that a special allocation tax would be allocated to the members who were in charge of four positions (Choi and Kim, 2008). On the other hand, in situations where

the allocation of special grants to the ruling party has been favorably allocated, opposition members with high seniority do not seem to be intimate with the president or the president-elected bureaucracy, so it seems unlikely that they can mobilize a lot of special grants.

Hypothesis 2. If the district is represented by a lawmaker of ruling party with high seniority, it is expected to receive more special allocation tax in 2015.

### III. VARIABLES AND DATA

#### 1. Dependent Variable

In Korea's local governments, the difference between revenue and expenditure is not well preserved because the tax system is managed by the national tax, while the local government is responsible for a considerable portion of the expenditure. Therefore, the central government allocates a certain amount of financial resources to the local government in order to maintain the difference between the revenue and the expenditure, and this is called the local financial adjustment system (Choi and Lee, 2011). In other words, the local adjustment system is a system in which the central government provides financial assistance to local governments in order to provide a minimum level of service to all residents regardless of the financial power of local governments, and this system includes state subsidies, local allocation taxes, and local grants that were abolished under the Roh administration (Choi and Kim, 2008). Among them, the local allocation tax can be classified into the general grant tax, special grant tax, and real estate grant tax. Among the special grant tax, there are demand for disaster countermeasures, measure demand, and local issue demand. The demand for disaster countermeasures has a clear standard of occurrence of disasters, and the government policy demand has clear criteria such as whether to implement the state promotion project or whether there is a local government with excellent performance. However, allocation standard of local demand is relatively ambiguous. In other words, in the case of regional demand, it is not easy to decide what to consider as a local issue because regional issues may vary from region to region.

And the ambiguous allocation standard of the local pending demand causes the problem of subjectivity and confidentiality. First of all, because of the ambiguity of the allocation standard, there is a possibility that the subject of the policy maker may be intervened. In addition, if the subjective judgment of the policy maker has a great influence on the distribution, it is likely that the government will limit the data to private because it seems to raise the issue of social equity.

Previous studies on special grant tax have consistently raised the issue of regional inequality (Kim, 2001; Heo and Kwon, 2009). According to Seoktae Kim (2001), there is much room for intervention by the Ministry of Interior, the members of the provincial district and local autonomous governments are lobbying for the allocation of the special grant tax since there are many cases in which the contents of local projects are not definitively confirmed until the beginning of the fiscal year. In fact, lobbying and nepotism are being conducted for the

Ministry of Interior, which allocates special grant tax because the amount of special grant tax differs depending on the network and lobbying capacity of the local governor and regional council members (Choi and Lee, 2011).

This study refers to the research model of Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009) in order to find out the political mechanism for the allocation of special grant tax. Regarding the data on special grant tax, the data set used in the analyses was provided by the Ministry of Interior, and only the demand for local issues is analyzed. Because, the criteria for 'local issues' are ambiguous among the special grant tax. Political variables such as lobbying between local and central governments and subjective judgment of policy-makers are expected to intervene in allocating special grant taxes.

In this study, it is assumed that the ruling party is more advantageous for the distribution of the special grant tax to its districts than the opposition party, as it is the ruling party and the majority party for about 10 years. In addition, since it is about a year before the 2016 general election, it is anticipated that the competition of allocation of special grant tax among the regional district councilors has reached a peak ever. In fact, Table 1 shows a significant difference in the amount of special allocation tax for 2015 in the local districts of ruling and opposition lawmakers. In the case of the districts represented by the ruling party lawmakers, it was found that about 280 million won was distributed more than the districts represented by the opposition lawmakers. This is different from the 17th National Assembly study, where the average amount of special grants between the ruling party and the opposition party did not show a significant difference.

TABLE 1.  
SPECIAL GRANT ALLOCATION AMOUNT OF RULING AND OPPOSITION PARTY  
IN 2015 (UNIT: MILLION)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	
Ruling party	1362.46	976.35	136	t=2.340 (P<0.05)
Opposition party	1084.06	702.23	69	

#### 2. Independent Variables and Control Variables

##### 1) Independent Variables

The main independent variables in this study are the seniority and standing committees of the legislators, and the data were obtained from the National Election Commission. Since the analysis unit of the study model of Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009) is district, names of the legislators, seniority, and the standing committees were coded according to the districts. When multiple members were elected from one city, county or district, and all of them belong to the same political party, the member with the highest seniority were coded. In addition, if the seniority of the electors is also same, the candidate who has the smallest difference in the percentage of votes with the second candidate is coded. Because, it seems that there are many

resources that can be mobilized to allocate a special grant tax to their districts when legislator's seniority is high. In this study, the difference of votes between the first and second candidates was not considered as a significant independent variable because the situation is about three years after the election in 2015, the candidate who has the smallest difference in the percentage of votes with the second candidate is coded. If both party and seniority are the same, the elected lawmakers in the swing districts are likely to make more efforts for reelection than other winners with a high percentage of votes. Also, about the regions where both the ruling party and the opposition party were elected, they were excluded from the analysis of this study for comparison with the results of the 17th research.

## 2) Control Variables

The socioeconomic and political dimensions that may affect the calculation of the amount of special grant for each region are defined as control variables. First, as a control variable at the political level, the difference in the percentage of votes between the first and second candidates was selected. According to a study by Sukjae Heo and Hyukyong Kwon (2009), it was revealed that the opposition parties in the 17th National Assembly were required to allocate more special grants to the floating districts in order to maximize the number of seats. On the other hand, since 2015 is about three years after the 19th general election in this study, it is expected that the influence of the members' resources will be stronger. And, examples of members' resources are the seniority and the standing committees rather than the difference in the votes of the electors and the second candidates. Information on the difference in percentage of votes was obtained from the National Election Commission. In addition, data of the Statistics Korea were used for the total population, population density and financial independence in 2015, which are socioeconomic variables. In addition, the dummy variables included Honam and Yeongnam, because political parties might try to allocate pork barrels to regions where there is a strong support for a particular party.

Then, at a time when it is anticipated that there will be fierce competition to have their districts assigned to special grants for re-election, it will also be necessary to confirm that the allocation of special grant tax was not only based on political considerations, but also on the financial condition and demographic characteristics of the region. According to previous studies, the allocation of special grant tax to localities with low financial self-reliance, high population, and low population density is effective when considering local financial condition and demographic characteristics (Heo and Kwon, 2009).

As shown in <Figure 1>, which shows the financial self-reliance of 205 municipalities and the amount of special grant allocation in 2015, it seems that a less amount of special grant tax is allocated to areas with high financial independence. However, it was found that the regions with low financial self-reliance did not receive the special allocation tax relatively more than the ones with high financial self-reliance (correlation

coefficient = 0.017). In particular, in the case of Changwon (42.71) whose financial self-reliance rate is higher than the average (26.12), it received 6.2 billion won, much higher than the average amount of special grants (about 1.3 billion). These results may be influenced by the membership of the ruling party, the seniority of the legislature, and the membership of the Security and Public Administration Committee, so more rigorous verification should be done. The relationship between total population, population density, and special grant tax for the entire city, county, and county is the same as the results of previous studies.



Fig. 1 Financial self-reliance and special grant tax of 205 regions

## IV. ANALYSIS

In this study, a linear regression analysis (OLS) was used to study the mechanism of allocation of special grant tax in 2015 between ruling and opposition parties. Table 2 shows the results for the model presented in this study. First of all, among the districts of the Saenuri Party, which was the governing party in the 19th National Assembly, the existence of the legislators affiliated with the Security and Public Administration Committee did not have a significant effect on the allocation of the special grant tax. On the contrary, among the districts of the opposition party, it was found that the districts where the lawmakers belonging to the Security and Public Administration Committee are allocated a higher special grant tax than the districts of legislators belonging to the other standing committees. Considering that the standing committee variable is significant only in the districts of opposition lawmakers, the result in this research is different from the previous studies that the districts of the members of the parliamentarians belonging to the Security and Public Administration Committee were allocated more special tax regardless of their parties.

In other words, unlike the previous studies, the presence of the standing committee only in the districts of opposition lawmakers is significant, which means that the first hypothesis proposed in this study has been proven. If the special grant tax is a favorable resource for mobilization of ruling party lawmakers, there will be limited resources available for opposition lawmakers to mobilize many special grant taxes to their districts, and the presence of the standing committees is one of

the limited resources available to opposition lawmakers. This is because, as described above in the hypothetical part, the discretion of the minister appointed by the president is likely to be involved in the allocation of the special grant tax. In addition, during the 18th and 19th National Assembly, four of the six ministers were members of the ruling party before the minister, or were nominated after the minister. Therefore, in the case of a minister who would like to be nominated in future elections, his post-ministerial political goals are likely to have an impact in deciding on the allocation of special grant taxes. In addition, the Standing Committee is a means by which lawmakers can exercise their legitimate influence within the legislature in seeking to distribute special grant taxes to their constituencies.

In the case of seniority, which is the second independent variable, it was found that among the districts of the Saenuri Party that was the governing party in the 19th National Assembly, districts represented by the legislators with higher seniorities had a relatively large amount of special grant tax. On the other hand, in the districts of opposition lawmakers, the seniority of opposition lawmakers did not have a significant effect on the special grant tax. Considering the changes of the ruling party and the opposition party in the 17th National Assembly and the 19th National Assembly, the results as shown in Table 2 can be obtained. If the same party is in the position of majority party and ruling party in the 18th and 19th consecutive national assemblies in succession and the special grant tax itself is favorable for distribution of the ruling party members, as the ruling party members' seniority increases, their intimacy with the president and government officials will also continue to increase. In fact, many of the ruling party members with high seniorities have held the four positions (the head of the party, the secretary general, the president, the speaker of the National Assembly, and the deputy chairman of the National Assembly), their relations with the regime and the bureaucracy showed a positive impact on the allocation of special grant taxes to their districts. Especially in the case of Changwon, since the legislator had four times of experience as a parliamentarian in the ruling party, he seems to have been able to mobilize a lot of resources so that the Changwon area is allocated a special grant tax. On the other hand, in an environment where the districts of ruling party lawmakers are allocated a relatively large amount of special grant tax, the seniority itself has not had a significant impact on the allocation of special grant taxes to opposition lawmakers' districts.

The results of the remaining control variables show that the difference in the percentage of votes between the first and second candidates in each region does not have a significant effect on the amount of special grant tax as expected in this study since three years had passed after the 19th general election. Also, regression analysis shows that the ruling party received a lot of special grant taxes in Honam and Yeongnam compared to other regions, whereas the opposition party received many special grant taxes only in Honam region compared to other regions. This is inconsistent with the prediction that the ruling party will allocate a large amount of

special grant tax to the Yeongnam region and the opposition party will allocate a large amount of special grant tax to the Honam region because the ruling party and the opposition party receive overwhelming support from each region due to regionalism. Particularly, as mentioned above, when the special grant tax is distributed favorably to the districts of the ruling party lawmakers, the fact that opposition lawmakers were able to mobilize a large number of special grant taxes in Honam area compared to other regions may raise the question of whether to interpret it as a compensation strategy for long-standing supporters through a regionalist perspective. However, in the districts of the opposition lawmakers, it can be seen that the population density and financial independence do not have a significant effect on the amount of the special allocation tax allocated to the districts. This result shows that the special grant tax of Honam area is relatively higher than that of other provinces because the area with low population density and financial autonomy is the Honam area. Therefore, it cannot be said that the opposition party has unconditionally given a special grant tax to compensate the supporters of the Honam region or to mobilize them. In the situation where there is a lack of resources that could affect the allocation of special grant tax, due to the demographic and financial conditions, Honam region receives a lot of special grant tax among the districts of opposition lawmakers.

On the other hand, even if the total population, financial self-reliance, and population density are controlled in the ruling party's area, the special grant tax is distributed more in Yeongnam than other regions. These results suggest that the Saenuri party compensated the residents of Yeongnam who supported them in the 19th general election or tried to mobilize supporters for elections. On the other hand, among the districts of the ruling party members, the Honam region showed a much higher share of special grant tax than the other provinces. This seems to be caused by the influence of Saenuri Party lawmaker Lee, Jeonghyun, who was elected for by-election in Suncheon and Gokseong. As a legislative elected individual in a by-election, the time to show his efforts to the people of the province is relatively less than the elected members of the general election. Therefore, he will try to achieve the results shown to the residents in such a short period of time. At the same time, the party seeks to maximize the seats in the next election. And, since it is an unusual example that Saenuri was elected in Honam, as Dixit and Rondriggan (1996) argue, it can be concluded that the Saenuri party used a strategy to concentrate resources on the floating voters in the Honam region.

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIAL GRANTS BY RULING AND OPPOSITION PARTY IN 2015 (OLS)

		Ruling Party		Opposition Party	
		Coefficient	Standard Deviation	Coefficient	Standard Deviation
Control Variable	(Constant)	783.867***	237.622	444.892	393.067
	Population	0.004***	0.001	0.002**	0.001
	Density	-0.043**	0.014	-0.019	0.015
	Financial Self-Reliance	-22.252**	7.218	-2.678	7.970
	Honam	1063.343**	525.380	592.518**	283.475
	Yeongnam	291.974**	141.157	218.270	636.889
	Margin of Victory	7.402	4.652	-4.158	5.092
Independent Variable	Standing Committee	355.787	260.867	1034.528**	323.601
	Seniority	92.178*	52.188	59.886	81.924
	N	136		69	
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.446		0.250	

\*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the mechanism of how the budget of the 19th National Assembly is distributed through 2015 special grant tax distribution data. Due to the confidentiality of special grant tax data, the majority of the previous studies were targeted at the 17th National Assembly, so there was a lack of research on how the mechanism of resource allocation changed in the future. However, with the release of special grant tax data for 2015, it is possible to analyze the resource allocation mechanism in the 19th National Assembly. Nevertheless, this study is based only on special grant tax data for the year 2015, so subsequent studies should include special grant tax data for other years. Also, as the presidential election is scheduled to take place in 2017, attention must be paid to how the mechanism of allocation of special grant tax will change in the future. Of course, the special grant tax data must be made public so that the special grant tax study can be continued in the future.

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