

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1771

To require consultations on reuniting Korean Americans with family members
in North Korea.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 14, 2019

Ms. MENG (for herself, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. McGOVERN, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CISNEROS, Mr. WOODALL, Ms. BASS, and Ms. GABBARD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To require consultations on reuniting Korean Americans with
family members in North Korea.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Divided Families Re-
5 unification Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CONSULTATIONS ON REUNITING KOREAN AMERI-**
2 **CANS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN NORTH**
3 **KOREA.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
5 ings:

6 (1) The division of the Korean Peninsula into
7 South Korea and North Korea separated thousands
8 of Koreans from family members.

9 (2) Since the signing of the Agreement Con-
10 cerning a Military Armistice in Korea, signed at
11 Panmunjom July 27, 1953 (commonly referred to as
12 the “Korean War Armistice Agreement”), there has
13 been little to no contact between Korean Americans
14 and family members who remain in North Korea.

15 (3) North Korea and South Korea first agreed
16 to reunions of divided families in 1985 and have
17 since held 20 face-to-face reunions and 7 video link
18 reunions.

19 (4) Those reunions have subsequently given ap-
20 proximately 22,000 Koreans the opportunity to
21 briefly reunite with loved ones.

22 (5) The most recent family reunions between
23 North Korea and South Korea took place in August
24 2018 and did not include any Korean Americans.

25 (6) The United States and North Korea do not
26 maintain diplomatic relations and certain limitations

1 exist on Korean Americans participating in face-to-
2 face reunions.

3 (7) According to the most recent census, more
4 than 1,700,000 people living in the United States
5 are of Korean descent.

6 (8) The number of first generation Korean and
7 Korean American family members divided from fam-
8 ily members in North Korea is rapidly diminishing
9 given the advanced age of those family members.
10 More than 3,000 elderly South Koreans die each
11 year without having been reunited with their family
12 members.

13 (9) Many Korean Americans with family mem-
14 bers in North Korea have not seen or communicated
15 with those family members in more than 60 years.

16 (10) The inclusion of Korean American families
17 in the reunion process would constitute a positive
18 humanitarian gesture by the Government of North
19 Korea.

20 (11) Section 1265 of the National Defense Au-
21 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law
22 110–181; 122 Stat. 407) required the President to
23 submit to Congress a report on “efforts, if any, of
24 the United States Government to facilitate family re-

1 unions between United States citizens and their rel-
2 atives in North Korea”.

3 (12) The position of Special Envoy on North
4 Korean Human Rights Issues has been vacant since
5 January 2017, although the President is required to
6 appoint a Senate-confirmed Special Envoy to fill this
7 position in accordance with section 107 of the North
8 Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C.
9 7817).

10 (13) In the report of the Committee on Appro-
11 priations of the House of Representatives accom-
12 panying H.R. 3081, 111th Congress (House Report
13 111–187), the Committee urged “the Special Rep-
14 resentative on North Korea Policy, as the senior of-
15 ficial handling North Korea issues, to prioritize the
16 issues involving Korean divided families and to, if
17 necessary, appoint a coordinator for such families”.

18 (b) CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED.—

19 (1) CONSULTATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA.—
20 The Secretary of State, or a designee of the Sec-
21 retary, shall consult with officials of South Korea, as
22 appropriate, on potential opportunities to reunite
23 Korean American families with family members in
24 North Korea from which such Korean American

1 families were divided after the signing of the Korean
2 War Armistice Agreement.

3 (2) CONSULTATIONS WITH KOREAN AMERI-
4 CANS.—Not less frequently than once every 180
5 days, the Special Envoy on North Korean Human
6 Rights Issues of the Department of State shall con-
7 sult with representatives of Korean Americans with
8 family members in North Korea with respect to ef-
9 forts to reunite families divided after the signing of
10 the Korean War Armistice Agreement.

11 (3) NO ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF AP-
12 PROPRIATIONS.—No additional amounts are author-
13 ized to be appropriated to the Department of State
14 to carry out consultations under this subsection.

15 (c) REPORTS REQUIRED.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, act-
17 ing through the Special Envoy on North Korean
18 Human Rights Issues, shall submit to Congress, as
19 part of each report required under section 107(d) of
20 the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (22
21 U.S.C. 7817(d)), a report on consultations described
22 in subsection (b) conducted during the year pre-
23 ceding the submission of each report required under
24 such section 107(d).

1 (2) INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY INTO FAM-
2 ILY REUNIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the
3 date of the enactment of this Act, the Special Envoy
4 on North Korean Human Rights Issues of the De-
5 partment of State shall submit to the Committee on
6 Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and
7 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate
8 a report on the opportunities for video reunions be-
9 tween Korean Americans with family members in
10 North Korea.

11 (3) FORM.—The reports required by para-
12 graphs (1) and (2) shall be submitted in unclassified
13 form to the maximum extent possible, but may in-
14 clude classified annexes.

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