

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2688

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 10, 2021

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, and Ms. CORTEZ
MASTO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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 “Korean War Divided
5 Families Reunification Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. CONSULTATIONS ON REUNITING KOREAN AMERI-**
7 **CANS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN NORTH**
8 **KOREA.**

9 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
10 ings:

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

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

10 (3) North Korea and South Korea first agreed
11 to reunions of divided families in 1985 and have
12 since held 21 face-to-face reunions and multiple
13 video link reunions.

14 (4) Those reunions have subsequently given ap-
15 proximately 24,500 Koreans the opportunity to
16 briefly reunite with loved ones.

17 (5) The most recent family reunions between
18 North Korea and South Korea took place in August
19 2018 and did not include any Korean Americans.

20 (6) The United States and North Korea do not
21 maintain diplomatic relations and certain limitations
22 exist on Korean Americans participating in face-to-
23 face reunions.

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

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

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

14 (10) The inclusion of Korean American families
15 in the reunion process, with the support of inter-
16 national organizations with expertise in family trac-
17 ing, would constitute a positive humanitarian ges-
18 ture by the Government of North Korea.

19 (11) Section 1265 of the National Defense Au-
20 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law
21 110–181; 122 Stat. 407) required the President to
22 submit to Congress a report on “efforts, if any, of
23 the United States Government to facilitate family re-
24 unions between United States citizens and their rel-
25 atives in North Korea”.

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

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

16 (14) In the report of the Committee on Appro-
17 priations of the House of Representatives accom-
18 panying H.R. 133, 116th Congress (House Report
19 116–444), the Committee urged “the Office of
20 North Korean Human Rights, in consultation with
21 Korean American community organizations, to iden-
22 tify Korean Americans who wish to be reunited with
23 their family in North Korea in anticipation of future
24 reunions”.

25 (b) CONSULTATIONS.—

1 (1) CONSULTATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA.—

2 The Secretary of State, or a designee of the Sec-
3 retary, should consult with officials of South Korea,
4 as appropriate, on potential opportunities to reunite
5 Korean American families with family members in
6 North Korea from which such Korean American
7 families were divided after the signing of the Korean
8 War Armistice Agreement, including potential oppor-
9 tunities for video reunions for Korean Americans
10 with such family members.

11 (2) CONSULTATIONS WITH KOREAN AMERI-

12 CANS.—The Special Envoy on North Korean Human
13 Rights Issues of the Department of State should
14 regularly consult with representatives of Korean
15 Americans who have family members in North
16 Korea with respect to efforts to reunite families di-
17 vided after the signing of the Korean War Armistice
18 Agreement, including potential opportunities for
19 video reunions for Korean Americans with such fam-
20 ily members.

21 (3) NO ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF AP-

22 PROPRIATIONS.—No additional amounts are author-
23 ized to be appropriated to the Department of State
24 to carry out consultations under this subsection.

1 (c) ADDITIONAL MATTER IN REPORT.—The Sec-
2 retary of State, acting through the Special Envoy on
3 North Korean Human Rights Issues, shall include in each
4 report required under section 107(d) of the North Korean
5 Human Rights Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 7817(d)), a de-
6 scription of the consultations described in subsection (b)
7 conducted during the year preceding the submission of
8 each report required under such section 107(d).

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