

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

DIVIDED FAMILIES REUNIFICATION ACT

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 826) to require consultations on reuniting Korean Americans with family members in North Korea.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 826

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Divided Families Reunification Act”.

SEC. 2. CONSULTATIONS ON REUNITING KOREAN AMERICANS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN NORTH KOREA.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

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

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

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

(4) Those reunions have subsequently given approximately 24,500 Koreans the opportunity to briefly reunite with loved ones.

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

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

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

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

(9) Many Korean Americans with family members in North Korea have not seen or communicated with those family members in more than 60 years.

(10) The inclusion of Korean American families in the reunion process, with the support of international organizations with expertise in family tracing, would constitute a positive humanitarian gesture by the Government of North Korea.

(11) Section 1265 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181; 122 Stat. 407) required the

President to submit to Congress a report on “efforts, if any, of the United States Government to facilitate family reunions between United States citizens and their relatives in North Korea”.

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

(13) In the report of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives accompanying H.R. 3081, 111th Congress (House Report 111-187), the Committee urged “the Special Representative on North Korea Policy, as the senior official handling North Korea issues, to prioritize the issues involving Korean divided families and to, if necessary, appoint a coordinator for such families”.

(14) In the report of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives accompanying H.R. 133, 116th Congress (House Report 116-444), the Committee urged “the Office of North Korean Human Rights, in consultation with Korean American community organizations, to identify Korean Americans who wish to be reunited with their family in North Korea in anticipation of future reunions”.

(b) CONSULTATIONS.—

(1) CONSULTATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA.—The Secretary of State, or a designee of the Secretary, should consult with officials of South Korea, as appropriate, on potential opportunities to reunite Korean American families with family members in North Korea from which such Korean American families were divided after the signing of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, including potential opportunities for video reunions for Korean Americans with such family members.

(2) CONSULTATIONS WITH KOREAN AMERICANS.—The Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights Issues of the Department of State should regularly consult with representatives of Korean Americans who have family members in North Korea with respect to efforts to reunite families divided after the signing of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, including potential opportunities for video reunions for Korean Americans with such family members.

(3) NO ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—No additional amounts are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of State to carry out consultations under this subsection.

(c) ADDITIONAL MATTER IN REPORT.—The Secretary of State, acting through the Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights Issues, shall include in each report required under section 107(d) of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 7817(d)), a description of the consultations described in subsection (b) conducted during the year preceding the submission of each report required under such section 107(d).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 826.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 826, the Divided Families Reunification Act, introduced by my colleague, Representative GRACE MENG, who has been a tireless champion of reuniting divided Korean-American families.

This bill encourages the State Department to engage with the South Korean Government and Korean-American families regarding opportunities to reunite those families with their relatives in North Korea.

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Many Korean Americans have been unable to see or hear from their loved ones for over 70 years, a unique heartache that very few of us can really understand.

Family is the bedrock of our society. Tragically, for thousands of Korean Americans, their sisters and brothers and even daughters and sons have been painfully out of reach through no fault of their own.

While there have been 21 family reunions held between North and South Korea since 1985, Korean Americans with family members in North Korea have been unable to participate.

As many of these Korean Americans are aging, we must advocate for humane and commonsense policy to help Korean-American families reunite with their loved ones in North Korea. We have the resources and the technology to reunite these families. What we need now is action to implement a more compassionate policy.

This is an important measure. I support it, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of the Divided Families Reunification Act. The sorrowful legacy of the Korean war is with us even today, almost 70 years after the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed.

The Korean peninsula remains divided between a nation of free people and a nation that subjects its people to utter tyranny.

The barbaric Kim regime continues to threaten the peace and security of South Korea, the region, and even the world.

And families remain broken, from those still fighting to bring their loved ones' remains home, to those with family members trapped in North Korea. This is an attempt to try to say let's get this moving to try to get those families reunited.

Our vibrant Korean-American community, led by groups such as the Korean American Grassroots Conference,

feels this legacy strongly, so I commend Congresswoman MENG for introducing this legislation which directs the State Department to consult with South Korea and Korean Americans on opportunities to reunite families separated by the DMZ.

I also trust that the State Department will be vigilant in ensuring that organizations with ties to North Korea will not be exploiting the desire of these families to be reunited with their loved ones to raise hard currency for the Kim regime.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I urge support for the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM), the vice ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific and an original cosponsor of this legislation.

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in support of H.R. 826, the Divided Families Reunification Act, and I want to thank Congresswoman MENG for introducing this bill and the House Foreign Affairs Committee for ensuring a speedy passage of this timely legislation.

I am also proud to colead another bill under consideration today that addresses this issue, H. Res. 294, introduced by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS).

Since implementing family reunions in 1985, the South and North Korean Governments have facilitated 21 in-person reunions and seven video reunions. However, the nearly 100,000 Korean Americans with family members in North Korea have been left out of this process entirely.

As a longtime advocate for human rights and humanitarian aid in North Korea, I have consistently spoken on the need to prioritize these issues, especially by appointing a Special Envoy for North Korean human rights issues, which has remained vacant since 2017, and remains unfilled under President Biden.

Time is running out for separated family members, as many are in their eighties and nineties, and their numbers continue to dwindle. Congress and the Biden administration must come together to make Korean-American participation and reunifications a reality before it is too late.

My mother-in-law was one of the many Koreans who made the brave journey across the 38th parallel line to bring her family to South Korea. She crossed five times to go back and forth and bring family members across to South Korea.

As an immigrant from South Korea whose family lived through the Korean war, and now as one of the first Korean-American women to serve in Congress, I am proud to use my voice in

support of this issue that is deeply personal to me and our Korean-American community.

I want to again thank Representatives KAREN BASS and GRACE MENG for introducing these measures and for working to garner strong bipartisan support.

I urge my colleagues to support House passage of these bills today and for the Senate to prioritize consideration of this issue on behalf of the tens of thousands of Korean Americans alive today waiting to reunite with their long lost family members.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, for decades Korean Americans have been unable to see or speak with their family members in North Korea, and for too many, time is running out. This heartbreaking reality has taken a huge toll, and it is time to take action.

This bill, introduced by my colleague, Representative MENG, would spur the State Department into finding opportunities to reunite them with their loved ones and to address this humanitarian issue that has caused so much heartache for countless Korean Americans.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favor of H.R. 826, the Divided Families Reunification Act, a bill I authored to raise the voices of families who have been separated for decades both across the DMZ and across the Pacific Ocean.

I want to thank Chairman MEEKS for working with me on this important issue, and for his efforts to bring this bill to the floor. I also want to thank Congressman VAN TAYLOR who partnered with me to introduce this humane and commonsense legislation, which, during the 116th Congress, unanimously passed the House of Representatives.

Over seventy years ago, millions of Koreans were plunged into a harrowing war that brought misery, death, and destruction to their lives. Since then, the war has been frozen by an armistice agreement, signed on July 27, 1953, that persists to today. The division of the Korean Peninsula into South and North Korea separated millions of Koreans from their family members. Through the years, there have been some agreed upon reunions between South and North Koreans. For Korean Americans, however, there is no pathway for such reunions, as they have not been permitted to participate in these inter-Korean family reunions. Many of these Americans are in their 70s through 90s, and time is of the essence to be reunited with their families. I have had the honor to meet some of these divided Korean American family members, and it breaks my heart that their chance of a reunion with their loved ones grows less likely each day.

As a member of the State and Foreign Operations (SFOPS) Subcommittee on the

House Appropriations Committee, I am proud to have secured provisions in the Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 accompanying reports that support the reunification of Korean Americans and their families in North Korea. And in the SFOPS Fiscal Year 2022, which recently passed out of the full committee, a provision calling on the Office of North Korean Human Rights to investigate the risks associated with third-party brokers who offer to locate and reunite divided families.

The unresolved status of the war continues to impact multiple generations of Korean Americans, particularly women, in myriad ways. All these years later, many survivors of the war are still haunted by their trauma. And younger generations who are responsible for their caregiving often internalize this unresolved grief.

The Divided Families Reunification Act requires the Secretary of State or a designee to consult with officials in South Korea on potential opportunities to reunite Korean American families with family members in North Korea. This bill will also require the Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights to submit a report on the opportunities for video reunions between Korean Americans and family members in North Korea.

With that Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this bipartisan bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 826.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

ENCOURAGING REUNIONS OF DIVIDED KOREAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 294) encouraging reunions of divided Korean-American families.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 294

Whereas the Korean Peninsula, with the Republic of Korea (in this resolution referred to as "South Korea") in the South and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (in this resolution referred to as "North Korea") in the North, remains divided following the signing of the Korean War Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953;

Whereas the division of the Korean Peninsula separated more than 10,000,000 Korean family members, including some who are now citizens of the United States;

Whereas there have been 21 rounds of family reunions between South Koreans and North Koreans along the border since 2000;