

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 1771

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 10, 2020

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

AN ACT

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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Divided Families Re-
3 unification Act”.

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

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
8 ings:

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

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

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

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

1 (5) The most recent family reunions between
2 North Korea and South Korea took place in August
3 2018 and did not include any Korean Americans.

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

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

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

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

21 (10) The inclusion of Korean American families
22 in the reunion process would constitute a positive
23 humanitarian gesture by the Government of North
24 Korea.

1 (11) Section 1265 of the National Defense Au-
2 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law
3 110–181; 122 Stat. 407) required the President to
4 submit to Congress a report on “efforts, if any, of
5 the United States Government to facilitate family re-
6 unions between United States citizens and their rel-
7 atives in North Korea”.

8 (12) The position of Special Envoy on North
9 Korean Human Rights Issues has been vacant since
10 January 2017, although the President is required to
11 appoint a Senate-confirmed Special Envoy to fill this
12 position in accordance with section 107 of the North
13 Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C.
14 7817).

15 (13) In the report of the Committee on Appro-
16 priations of the House of Representatives accom-
17 panying H.R. 3081, 111th Congress (House Report
18 111–187), the Committee urged “the Special Rep-
19 resentative on North Korea Policy, as the senior of-
20 ficial handling North Korea issues, to prioritize the
21 issues involving Korean divided families and to, if
22 necessary, appoint a coordinator for such families”.

23 (b) CONSULTATIONS.—

24 (1) CONSULTATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA.—

25 The Secretary of State, or a designee of the Sec-

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

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

19 (3) NO ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF AP-
20 PROPRIATIONS.—No additional amounts are author-
21 ized to be appropriated to the Department of State
22 to carry out consultations under this subsection.

23 (c) ADDITIONAL MATTER IN REPORT.—The Sec-
24 retary of State, acting through the Special Envoy on
25 North Korean Human Rights Issues, shall include in each

Attest: **CHERYL L. JOHNSON,**
Clerk.