

United States and North Korea to pursue reunions as a humanitarian priority of immediate concern. I also urge them to support H.R. 1771, the Divided Families Reunification Act, introduced by my colleague Representative GRACE MENG, that takes up the same issue.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I urge my colleagues to support Representative BASS' resolution to stand with Korean Americans seeking to reunite with family members stranded inside North Korea.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, most of us can't imagine the pain of going decades without knowing if your relatives are alive or dead. That is the daily struggle for thousands of families torn apart by the Korean war.

Mr. Speaker, this measure underscores our support for reuniting these families, bringing solace and closure to this deep wound left by the war. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 410, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SECURITY ACT

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2444) to authorize the Secretary of State to make direct loans under section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2444

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 "Eastern European Security Act".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that it is in the national security interest of the United States to—

(1) deter aggression against North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies by Russia or any other adversary;

(2) assist NATO allies in acquiring and deploying modern, NATO interoperable military equipment and reducing their dependence on Russian or former Soviet-era defense articles;

(3) ensure that NATO allies meet alliance defense commitments, including through adequate investments in national defense;

(4) supplement existing grant assistance to key allies through foreign military financing loans, at rates competitive with those already available on commercial markets, to purchase NATO-interoperable military equipment; and

(5) work to maintain and strengthen the democratic institutions and practices of all NATO allies, in accordance with the goals of Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

SEC. 3. FOREIGN MILITARY LOAN AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning in fiscal year 2021, subject to the notification requirements under subsection (b) and to the availability of appropriations, the President, acting through the Secretary of State, is authorized—

(1) to make direct loans under section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2763) to NATO member countries that joined the alliance after March 1, 1999, notwithstanding the minimum interest rate required by subsection (c)(1) of such section; and

(2) to charge fees for such loans under paragraph (1), which shall be collected from borrowers in accordance with section 502(7) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and which may be used to cover the costs of such loans as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(b) NOTIFICATION.—A loan may not be made under the authority provided by subsection (a) unless the Secretary of State submits to the appropriate congressional committees a certification, not fewer than fifteen days before entering into an agreement to make such loan, that—

(1) the recipient country is making demonstrable progress toward meeting its defense spending commitments in accordance with the 2014 NATO Wales Summit Declaration; and

(2) the government of such recipient country is respecting that country's constitution and upholds democratic values such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the rule of law, and the rights of religious minorities.

(c) REPAYMENT.—A loan made under the authority provided by subsection (a) shall be repaid in not more than 12 years, but may include a grace period of up to one year on the repayment of the principal.

(d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this Act, the term "appropriate congressional committees" means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2444.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2444, the Eastern European Security Act.

I want to thank Ranking Member McCAUL for working on this excellent measure that mirrors Chairman ELIOT ENGEL's bill, the NATO Defense Financing Act, in pursuit of a stronger transatlantic partnership.

Mr. Speaker, the United States and its European allies have, together, built the most successful alliance in the history of the world. The NATO alliance is strengthened by our shared values, mutual trust, ability to work together, and, if necessary, to fight together.

It is crucial that NATO is ready and able to defend against external threats and engage in combat. For that to happen, all of our allies must be able to work together seamlessly. But right now, some of our Eastern European allies still rely on Russian or old Soviet era equipment. Modernizing these military forces is a national security imperative.

The Eastern European Security Act puts in place direct loans to our security partners so they can update their military equipment to better address their shifting and complex security needs. As adversaries like Russia continue to test our alliance's defenses and cohesion, these loans would be a meaningful step towards ensuring that we are ready and able to face evolving threats on the horizon.

These loans will complement, not replace, our ongoing U.S. security assistance effort to Europe and will be conditioned upon our allies upholding their own constitutions and the democratic values of the alliance.

The United States must not only support the militaries of our NATO allies, but also safeguard the continued strength of the democratic values upon which the alliance is built. I hope all Members will join me in approving this measure that better supports our European allies and advances the United States' national security interests.

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

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

I rise today in support of the Eastern European Security Act, introduced by the lead Republican of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. MICHAEL McCAUL. This bipartisan bill supports our NATO allies and American jobs and is the best way to secure the NATO alliance.

The NATO alliance is essential to our national security, but it is only as strong as its most vulnerable members. Some newer member countries with smaller economies want to purchase American military hardware, but such purchases are often out of reach. As a result, these partner nations are forced to purchase less expensive and, often, less reliable military equipment from other allies or even our strategic competitors, Russia and China. Such purchases threaten America's security as well as the security of the alliance.

This bill would give the executive branch the flexibility it needs to help secure the sale of American military equipment to our NATO allies, which will not only promote our national security interests but, also, promote American jobs and bring in revenue to the treasury over the life of the loan.

This legislation is long overdue, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this very important bipartisan bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank Congressman MCCAUL for his hard work on this measure. He has been a tireless advocate on behalf of this issue.

NATO security is U.S. security, and the continued protection of every American is dependent upon a strong NATO alliance. Our allies selflessly demonstrated this commitment when they came to America's aid after the terrorist attack of 9/11, and it is important that the United States remain committed to our allies and our shared democratic values as well.

This is a good measure, and I am pleased to support it. I urge all Members to do the same.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIRES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2444, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1645

DIVIDED FAMILIES REUNIFICATION ACT

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1771) to require consultations on reuniting Korean Americans with family members in North Korea, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1771

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 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".

(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 gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIRES) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 1771.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking Ms. MENG for sponsoring this good bill to provide much-needed relief to Korean Americans who have been separated from their family members, many of them for decades now.

The Korean war tore families apart almost 70 years ago, and it is a humanitarian tragedy that many of them have been separated ever since. It is long past time for these families to be able to reunite. People who lost their parents when they were only toddlers are now senior citizens with children and grandchildren of their own.

The Divided Families Reunification Act requires the Department of State to consult with our South Korean allies, and the Korean-American community to make more of these reunions happen as soon as possible. Anyone who has seen footage of these reunions can attest to their profound significance—they demonstrate that the bonds of family cannot be severed by wars, by decades, by distance, or by government repression.

This bill also requires the Department of State to report to Congress on opportunities to facilitate more reunions by video connection, which is especially important to allow all Korean Americans, including those who might have difficulty with traveling long distances, a real opportunity to reconnect with their family members.

An important role in executing this humanitarian policy is the Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights issues. It is deeply concerning that the Trump administration has left this position vacant for over 2 years, since January 2017. Human rights in North Korea remains a bipartisan priority for this Congress, but if we are going to effectively advance these policies, we