

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Harry S. Truman Building
2201 C. Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to encourage you to prioritize the reunions of Korean Americans separated from their families in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). This year marks the 70th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Imperial Japan. In the seventy years since this momentous day on August 15, 1945, the division of the Korean Peninsula has separated millions of Korean families from their loved ones. The tragic separation is documented in several films that have gained traction in both the United States and in South Korea.

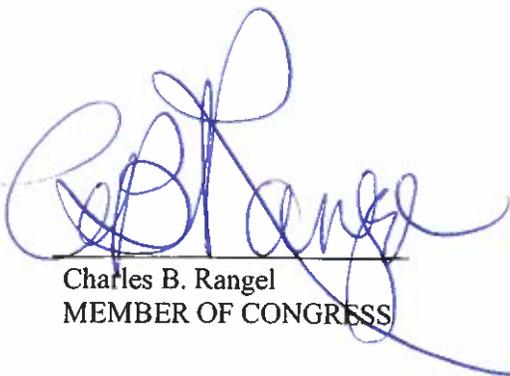
As you know, President Park Geun-hye has prioritized reunions for South Koreans with families in the DPRK. As a result, Korean family reunions were held along the border in February 2014. President Park has consistently worked to facilitate additional reunions. Unfortunately, an estimated 100,000 Korean Americans are excluded from these reunions due to our lack of diplomatic ties with the DPRK. Desperate to seek out their families, many have resorted to unofficial channels that are risky and pose threats to our citizens.

The U.S. Congress has tried to establish a humanitarian solution to this tragedy. In 2008, the National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 110-181) required former President George W. Bush to transmit within 180 days a report to Congress on the state of family reunions between U.S. citizens and the DPRK. In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (Public Law 111-242), which urged the Special Representative on North Korea Policy to prioritize the Korean divided families issue. Further, in 2014, we introduced H.Con.Res 91 and S. Res 587 in the House and Senate, respectively, which encourage reunions of divided Korean American families.

Since the transmission of President Bush's report more than five years ago, there has been no discernible progress in reuniting Korean Americans with their families. In light of this fact, we respectfully request a detailed update on the State Department's efforts to facilitate reunions between Korean Americans and their family members in the DPRK.

As the family unit is the bedrock of American society, there must be increased action in creating a pathway to reunite divided Korean American families. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Mark Kirk
MEMBER OF CONGRESS