

H.R. 1504/S. 690

Enhancing North Korea Humanitarian Assistance Act (ENKHA)

Status: Introduced by Rep. Andy Levin (House) and Sen. Ed Markey (Senate).

What the bills do:

Expedites the provision of humanitarian assistance, including life-saving medical care, to the people of North Korea, supporting the country's vulnerable populations and promoting global health security. The bill:

- Calls on the U.S. Treasury to streamline permissions for aid shipments to North Korea.
- Calls on U.S. representatives to the U.N. to encourage similar streamlining in U.N. processes.
- Calls on the State Department to provide a strategy to expedite permissions for humanitarian travel related to the repatriation of U.S. veterans' remains from the Korean War and Korean-American family reunification.
- Requires the administration to report to Congress on the efficacy of humanitarian exemptions to U.S. and U.N. sanctions.

Background:

The vulnerability of the North Korean population represents a risk to global health security.

- 10.1 million people in North Korea urgently need food assistance.
- 10.4 million are in need of nutritional support and better access to health care, clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities necessary to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.
- Poor health infrastructure leaves North Koreans vulnerable to disease:
 - 1 out of 10 children suffers from diarrhea.
 - 20,000 people died from tuberculosis in 2018.
 - 1 out of 3 households lacks clean drinking water.
- The country is not prepared to prevent or treat an outbreak of coronavirus or other health emergencies.

Why the timing is critical:

- North Korea's borders have been closed for over two years. When the country reopens, humanitarian organizations and private U.S. charities will need to move quickly and flexibly to meet needs exacerbated by the global COVID-19 crisis and border shutdowns.
- Humanitarian items including medical devices and water, sanitation, and hygiene items require complex and lengthy approval processes that can take humanitarian organizations anywhere from eight months to over a year to obtain.
- Delays in vaccinating the population of North Korea due to sanctions and travel restrictions would threaten the global health security of the entire region. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that the virus will not be eradicated anywhere until it is eradicated everywhere.
- For decades, humanitarian organizations and U.S. charities have supported vulnerable groups in North Korea yet U.S. regulations severely limit these groups' ability to respond to critical needs. These organizations not only provide lifesaving aid but are also the longest-standing channels for information from inside the country.

