

H.R. 826/S. 2688

Divided Families Reunification Act / Korean War Divided Families Reunification Act

Status: H.R. 826 Passed in the House (7/2021); S. 2688: Introduced by Sen. Hirono and Sen. Sullivan

What the bills do:

- Directs the U.S. Secretary of State to consult with his South Korean counterpart to identify opportunities for Korean Americans to participate in future family reunions, including by video.

- Directs the State Department’s Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights Issues to work with the Korean American community to identify those same opportunities.

Background:

At one point, an estimated 100,000 separated families of the Korean War resided in the United States. Many of them have passed away, and most who remain are in their 80s or 90s. They long to reunite with their families in North Korea, but time is running out.

“For nearly seventy years, too many Korean Americans have been separated from their loved ones in North Korea. Carol Li, a constituent of mine from Honolulu, understands this pain firsthand. Her maternal grandparents were separated from their siblings when they fled North Korea to South Korea during the Korean War. While her grandparents passed away before they were able to reconnect with their siblings, Carol wants the opportunity to meet her North Korean relatives during future reunions. This bipartisan legislation works to make that happen.”

— Sen Hirono

Why the timing is critical:

- Many separated families of the Korean War have passed away, and most who remain are in their 80s or 90s. Time is running out for aging Korean Americans hoping to reunite with loved ones in North Korea.

- Since 1985, 21 family reunions have been held between North and South Korea. But Korean Americans who may have family members in North Korea, have not been able to participate.

“An enduring tragedy of the Korean War is the thousands of families whose ties, like the peninsula, were severed along the thirty-eighth parallel...I’m glad to join Senator Hirono in reintroducing this legislation as part of a bipartisan effort to help secure a clear process for these families...”

— Sen Sullivan