

Statement for the Record
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)
May 24, 2018
H.R. 5515, National Defense Authorization Act, FY2019

- Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my amendment to H.R. 5515 that would require a report related to human rights in North Korea.
- The report would describe ongoing or planned efforts regarding the repatriation of members of the United States Armed Forces; the reunification of Korean Americans with relatives in North Korea; and an assessment of security risks posted by travel to North Korea for U.S. citizens.
- The division of North and South Korea along the 38th Parallel offers one of the world's most striking dichotomies, yet on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone resides a shared pain.
- The pain is that of the families ripped apart by the Korean War and an enduring division of one people into two countries.
- Reunions are a welcome respite from the separation, but, in the end, provide yet another reminder that family reunification on the Korean Peninsula is fleeting.
- Many of these Americans, more than 100,000 according to the last estimate, have been waiting to reunite with their family members in North Korea.
- Too many have already passed away without realizing that hope.
- This amendment would require an update on efforts to conduct family reunifications for these Korean Americans.
- It would also help heal old wounds by addressing the repatriation of members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have been missing since the Korean War.
- It is vital that our North Korea policy be informed with an understanding that there are human victims of the ongoing conflict on the Peninsula.
- I thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member, and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen for working with me on this amendment and ask that my colleagues support it.
- Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield back.