



CONSULATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
ANCHORAGE

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February 21, 2023

The Honorable Members
the 33rd Alaska Legislature

Alaska State Senate
Alaska State House

Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Honorable Alaska Legislature Members,

I write to you in support of SJR 6 and HJR 4: Honoring the Alaska-Korea relationship; and celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea, the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement, and the 120th anniversary of the first Korean immigration to the United States.

The United States and the Republic of Korea enjoy one of the closest relationships in the world. We are friends, allies, and partners. Our longstanding relations began 141 years ago with the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation in 1882, when Korea was a dynasty called Joseon. About 70 years later, the ROK and the US became allies with the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty in October 1953. The ROK-US alliance was founded on the spirit of comrades-in-arms forged in blood during the Korean War. We fought together for freedom and democracy in the Korean War, which broke out with North Korea's invasion in June 1950, and ended three years later with the Ceasefire Agreement in July 1953. Approximately 1.8 million US troops were engaged in the Korean War, with over 36,000 of them dying during the conflict, while 2,500 or more Alaska troops served in the war, with 10 of them falling. Today, about 28,500 US troops are stationed in Korea.

The ROK-US alliance has become, not only the foundation of Korea's defense and security, but also the cornerstone of its rapid economic growth and stable democracy. We, the ROK and the US, have successfully stood the test of time for the past seven decades. We have overcome numerous threats and provocations, including nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, from the North, and have successfully maintained peace on the Korean Peninsula based on our ironclad alliance cooperation.

Economic relations between our two countries have been upgraded by the ROK-US Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force in March 2012 and celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. The bilateral FTA has served as a vehicle to promote ROK-US economic ties. Bilateral trade for the past decade has expanded 67.8 percent to about \$169,100,000,000 in 2021 from \$101,800,000,000 in 2012. The mutual investment



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between the ROK and the US more than doubled during the same period. In particular, Korea's investment in the US has increased significantly, mainly in the semiconductor, battery, and automobile sectors. That has brought about the employment effect of 90,000 jobs in the US and strengthened bilateral supply chain cooperation. In 2019, about 2,300,000 Korean tourists visited the United States, and more than 1,000,000 American tourists visited the Republic of Korea, contributing considerably to the economies of each country. Covid-19 resulted in a sharp diminution in mutual visits in 2020 and 2021, but a rapid recovery is underway since the pandemic curve began to flatten last year.

Of course, the relationship of the ROK and the great state of Alaska has made great progress in the economy, people-to-people exchanges, military cooperation, and local government exchanges in lockstep with the development of ROK-US relations. Since 2018, the Republic of Korea has been Alaska's largest trading partner, with a volume of \$2,300,000,000 in 2021. The major trade items between Korea and Alaska are minerals & ores, fish & other marine products, petroleum & coal products, and computer & electronic products.

Some Korean companies have been contributing to Alaska's economy and employment. Korean Air and Asiana Airlines have been operating as major air cargo carriers at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, which is the world's 4th busiest airport for cargo throughput. Since the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the importance of air cargo has increased, and the role of Korean air cargo carriers has also been growing.

Each year, the ROK Air Force participates in Exercise Red Flag-Alaska, a joint aerial combat training exercise held by the US Air Force. Last year, two Korean Navy ships arrived in Anchorage for the first time in history as part of the ROK Navy Cruise Training. Alaska's strategic location and ROK-US common interests on the Korean Peninsula and in the region will make our bilateral military cooperation more expanded and stronger in the future.

Local governments in both countries acknowledge the strong ties between the ROK and Alaska and promote cultural and economic exchanges through establishing a sisterhood relationship: Incheon, a Korean metropolitan city, and Anchorage, Alaska's most populous city, signed in 1986. Assemblies between Incheon and Anchorage have also had a sisterhood relationship since 1993.

7,000 Koreans and Korean Americans live in Alaska, enriching Alaska's history and culture. They also serve at various corners of Alaska as military personnel, police officers, fire fighters, nurses and doctors, teachers, business owners, public servants, etc., contributing their talents to Alaska's safety, diversity, and unity. A shining example was Ms. Emma Broyles, a Korean American, who became Alaska's first Miss America last year and made Alaska's name widely known. Since 2008, the state of Alaska has celebrated Korea-Alaska



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Friendship Day on June 20. The Anchorage Korean community, in collaboration with the Korean Consulate in Anchorage, holds the Korea-Alaska Friendship Festival each year, acknowledging the longstanding ties, economic and cultural exchanges, and friendship between the Republic of Korea and the state of Alaska.

The ROK and the US have been developing a steadfast partnership, anchored in shared values and interests, as friends, allies, and partners. As agreed at the ROK-US summit in May 2022, our two countries are collaborating to achieve our shared goal of transforming the bilateral alliance into a global comprehensive strategic alliance, capable of addressing the most pressing regional and global challenges. Korean Americans, since their first immigration to the US 120 years ago, have become an integral part of America and also of Alaska, enriching the lives of both US and Alaska.

All things considered, I have the honor hereby to urge you to support this resolution honoring the Alaska-Korea relationship.

Sincerely,

Seung Man Sang
Consul and Head