

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2017

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you today to express our deep concern that a nominee to fill the vacancy of the U.S. ambassadorship to the Republic of Korea (ROK) in light of escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula has yet to be announced eight months into your presidency. Given the importance of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region to U.S. national security interests, we urge you to swiftly send a nominee to the Senate for advice and consent along with your nominees to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs which play key roles in coordinating U.S. diplomacy and defense policy on North Korea in addition to the wider region. We urge you to select highly qualified and competent nominees with extensive experience in the region including on North Korea issues.

As North Korea continues its illegal nuclear weapons program, commits blatant violations of international law, and makes threats to our country and allies, the confirmation of a U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea must be prioritized to send a concrete signal to reassure not only our ROK allies but also the American people, that one of our most important diplomatic relationships will be appropriately represented at the ambassadorial level. The United States has diplomatic relations with over 190 nations but none are as extensive and instrumental to our national security as those with our treaty allies such as the ROK. The U.S.-ROK alliance was strengthened by the bonds forged between U.S. and ROK troops during the Korean War and it continues to be strengthened by the Korean-American community, our economic ties and our mutual defense treaty commitments. We look forward to hearing your nominee's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on your administration's North Korea strategy and how the U.S.-ROK alliance can be further strengthened to meet the challenges and opportunities in our bilateral relationship.

Just as our diplomatic mission to the ROK deserves leadership of an ambassador to represent our nation's interests, our country's diplomatic and military efforts in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region deserve permanent Assistant Secretaries of State and Defense to coordinate our diplomatic efforts on North Korea, other regional challenges as well as opportunities to advance U.S. interests. As head of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs within the State Department, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs manages our diplomatic activities and serves as a key advisor to the Secretary of State and the Under

Secretary for Political Affairs on regional matters. Its Defense Department counterpart serves a similar role for oversight of security cooperation not only with our five treaty allies in the region but a growing number of partners key to our national security interests. The recent enactment of additional sanctions on North Korea from Congress and the United Nations Security Council warrant these posts to be filled on a non-acting basis to lead efforts to ensure close coordination with our allies and partners as implementation proceeds and dialogue continues on our response to North Korea's continued provocations.

To date, the Senate has confirmed 20 ambassadorial nominees including six to close allied nations. It is critical now for our government to affirmatively convey to our ROK allies that our relationship is valued in the same manner as these nations, and as senators we stand ready to consider your nominees for U.S. ambassador to the ROK as well as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



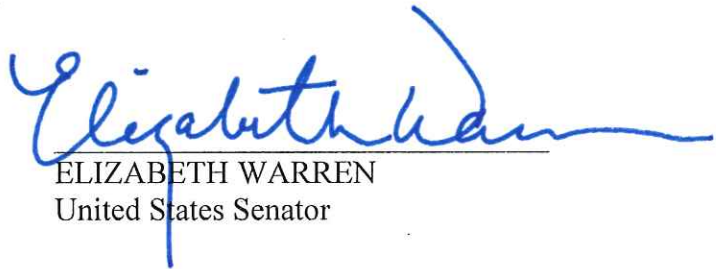
MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



HEIDI HEITKAMP
United States Senator



ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator



AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator



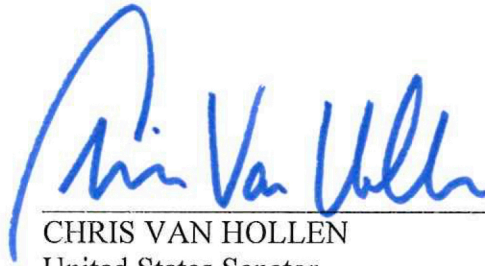
MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator



TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator



ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
United States Senator



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator

CC: Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State
James Mattis, Secretary of Defense
H.R. McMaster, National Security Advisor