

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2017

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to urge you to adopt a strong, strategic and steady policy toward North Korea, whose rapidly advancing nuclear and missile capabilities threaten the United States and our allies.

We acknowledge two fundamental points. First, North Korea's dangerous and destabilizing actions, in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions dating back to 2006, are the root cause of tensions between North Korea and the international community. Nevertheless, we believe your rhetoric in response has been counterproductive, escalating an already-dangerous situation. Second, while North Korea has been described as "the land of lousy options," we believe the U.S. can maximize the chance of success by charting a careful course that avoids capitulation to, or catastrophic war with, North Korea.

In our view, U.S. strategy toward North Korea should be guided by the following principles.

- **Increase Economic Pressure on North Korea Through the Imposition and Effective Enforcement of Sanctions**

U.S. and international economic sanctions on North Korea should be calibrated to make it harder for North Korea to import the technology and acquire the hard currency necessary to advance its nuclear and missile programs. They should also be tailored to produce sufficient economic hardship, particularly among the regime's elites, to cause Kim Jong-un to conclude that the cost of these programs outweigh their benefit and—accordingly—to choose negotiation over aggression. While U.S. and U.N. sanctions were recently strengthened, we believe there is room for more serious and sustained economic pressure on North Korea in an effort to change its strategic calculus.

While multilateral agreement to *impose* sanctions requires a significant diplomatic commitment, effective *enforcement* of sanctions involves even more time and resources. Far more should be done to ensure that other nations, including but not limited to China, are fulfilling their legal obligations. If a country has the will but not the ability to enforce sanctions against North Korea, the U.S. should offer technical or financial assistance. Conversely, if a country possesses the capacity but not the desire to implement sanctions, American officials should make clear to that country that it risks a fundamental breach in our bilateral relationship. The U.S. intelligence community, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of State should monitor, address and—where appropriate—penalize non-compliance in accordance with U.S. sanctions law.

- **Enhance U.S. Diplomatic Efforts, Especially Crisis Management Channels**

Tough, principled diplomacy with North Korea is not a concession or sign of weakness. President Reagan negotiated with the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. Whether North Korea is prepared to

negotiate an enduring and verifiable suspension of its nuclear and missile programs in exchange for sanctions relief is up to Pyongyang. But the United States should always be ready and willing to talk without preconditions.

In the interim, the U.S. must establish effective crisis-management channels with North Korea to clarify intentions and minimize the risk of miscalculation. When the U.S. communicates clearly and consistently to an adversary, it makes it less likely that the adversary will intentionally or inadvertently begin a conflict.

- **Strengthen, Don't Subvert, Alliances in East Asia**

At his confirmation hearing, Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated: "History is clear: nations with strong allies thrive and those without them wither." We are concerned that U.S. alliances in East Asia, particularly our security and economic partnership with South Korea, are being mismanaged. After North Korea's latest nuclear test, we were discouraged to see you accuse South Korean President Moon of "appeasement" toward North Korea, a claim as untrue as it is unhelpful.

Furthermore, while we have a range of views on the 2012 U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, we believe that now is the wrong time for the administration to engage in loose talk about unilateral withdrawal from the agreement. Kim Jong-un seeks to undermine the relationship between the U.S. and South Korea and to cause South Korea to question the credibility of our commitments. We should stand steadfast with our allies, not further Kim's efforts to divide us.

- **Recognize that Personnel is Policy**

We are disappointed that, eight months into your tenure, key policymakers needed to craft and carry out U.S. strategy in East Asia are not in place. At the Department of State, you have yet to nominate an individual to serve as Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, or Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security. At the Department of Defense, you have not nominated an individual to serve as Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs or appointed an individual to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia. These are self-inflicted wounds. We urge you to swiftly nominate or name qualified individuals to these critical positions.

- **Maintain Deterrence and Defense**

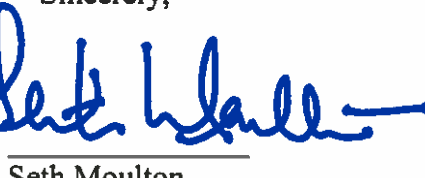
For nearly 65 years, U.S. leadership, military presence, and engagement with allies have prevented another devastating conflict on the Korean peninsula. While Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il, and now Kim Jong-un have acted aggressively, each has concluded that a direct attack on the U.S. or our allies would produce unacceptable consequences for the regime. The U.S. must continue to impart this message to North Korea through a variety of means, including by enhancing defensive systems and bolstering defense cooperation and intelligence sharing with South Korea and Japan.

Rather than using reckless rhetoric and sending muddled messages to our allies, the U.S. should pursue a comprehensive strategy toward North Korea that consists of economic pressure, strong and steady diplomacy, and credible deterrence and defense.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



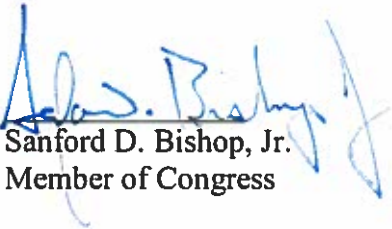
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



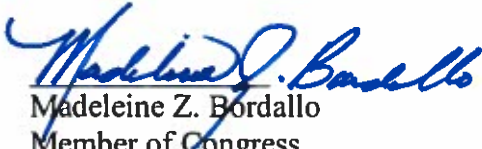
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



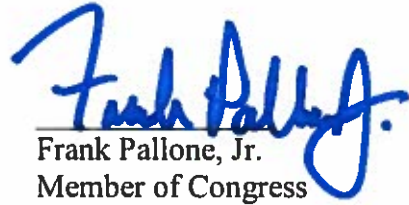
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



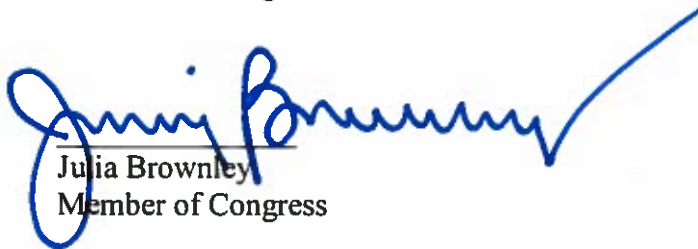
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



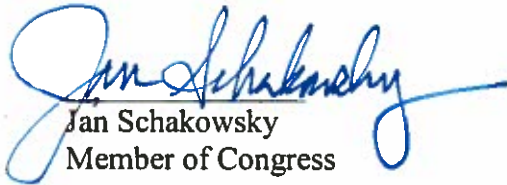
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



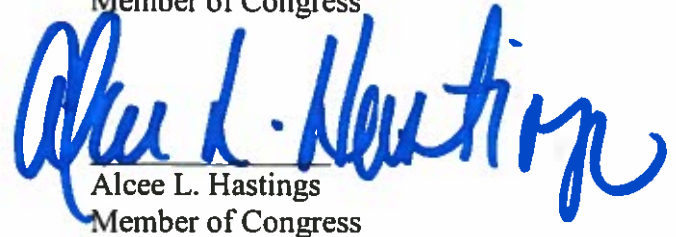
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Ami Bera
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



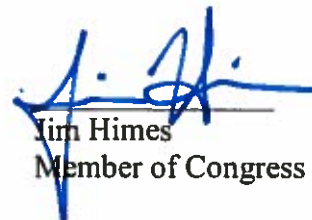
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



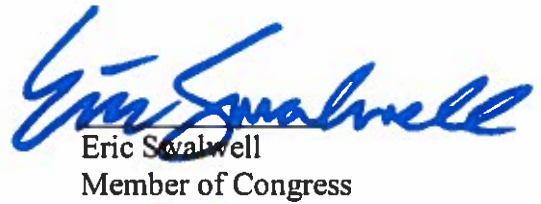
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Ted Lieu
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Jim Cooper
Member of Congress




Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress





Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

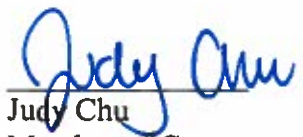


Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

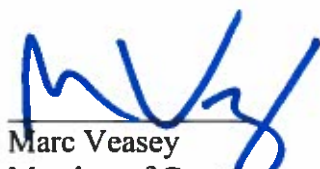

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

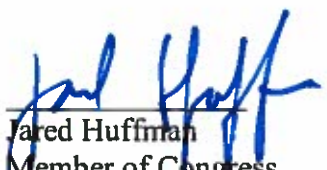

Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress


Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress


Jim Langevin
Member of Congress


Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress


Steve Cohen
Member of Congress


Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress


John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress


Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress