

**Korean-American Day Celebration
Shoreline
January 13, 2014**

Thank you, and thanks for inviting to the 7th anniversary of Korean American Day Celebration Foundation for organizing this fabulous evening of dinner and celebration.

Being with you tonight is a special honor because I returned from the Republic of Korea in mid-December as the guest of Consul Song Young-Wan and the Korean Consulate of Seattle. I also attended, and probably saw many of you at, the Korean Food Festival in November in Seattle, which is a celebration of fine Korean cuisine. I happen to enjoy Korean food very much so it was a delight to be there for some of the best cooking around.

Many of you know that I have two sons, Adam and Mark, whom we adopted as babies from Korea. Both have made me proud as they have progressed through life, established careers, got married and – perhaps most importantly - have brought Linda and I also many grandchildren to enjoy. We love them all dearly.

I would also like to pay special tribute to my friend and longtime colleague in the state Senate, Senator Paull Shin, who announced his resignation just last week due to health concerns.

Senator Shin represented his district very well through his many years in office and has been one of the Senate's go-to people on economic development and trade issues. He and I have worked closely together in those and many other areas. We could always count on Senator Shin as a stand-in to give the opening prayer on a moment's notice, and I know that it is his strong faith that has served him so well in the past will carry him through in the future. We will always appreciate Senator Shin or his outstanding service and the great friendship we have had over the years. How about a round of applause for Senator Shin? Thank you.

The annual Korean-American Day is now in its 7th year. Its purpose is two-fold. One is to honor Korean War Veterans at a memorial service at the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the Capitol campus in Olympia, which was held just this morning. We remember that just a few decades ago we were engaged in a terrible fight for democracy with our allies in South Korea, a fight that cost many American and Korean lives. Today we remember the sacrifices for democracy that were made back then, and also note that the South Korea stands as a testament to democracy to this day that their extraordinary efforts were not in vain.

The other reason behind Korean American Day of course is tonight's festivities, where we celebrate all of the many contributions and spirit of the 130,000 people of Korean descent who

live in the great state of Washington. We are the great state of Washington in no small part to our diversity because we are a richer place for it.

Former Governor Gregoire signed the Korean- American Day bill signed in April 9th, 2007. Of course Senator Shin was the prime sponsor on that legislation, which passed just two years after January 13 was designated as Korean American Day in the United States. In fact Washington was the first of what are now many states to make Korean American Day a non-legal holiday.

The day is important because it honors the hard work and productivity of Korean American business people, of whom there are many in our state. It recognizes that Korean Americans have made great educational, economic and cultural contributions to this state and to this country. It signals to the younger generation of Korean Americans, like my sons and grandchildren, that people of Korean descent are a welcome and important part of the fabric of people who count themselves as Americans.

The Korean immigrants whom I know, like Senator Shin, may honor and pay respect their Korean heritage, but put their America home first. Korea, being one of the closer and more open ports of Asia, is a significant and important Pacific Rim trading partner of Washington.

For many years now Washington has enjoyed a sister-state relationship with the Jeollabuk-do (JOL-LA-BOOK-DOH) Province in the Republic of Korea. It is through enhanced trade and cultural exchanges with the state of Jeollabuk-do(JOL-LA-BOOK-DOH) and other provinces that we prosper and grow.

Beyond the sister state relationship, there are 10 Washington cities that have sister city or friendship city relationships with counterparts in Korea, including the City of Shoreline, which has a sister city relationship with Boryeong (BO-REONG), also known as Daecheon (DAE-JON), in the South Chungcheong (CHOONG-CHONG-NAM-DOH) Province of Korea. I know that elected officials from Federal Way and other cities with close ties to Korea and with large populations of Korean Americans are here with us tonight.

Korean influence is strong in Washington state and strong in America. Many of us drive Korean cars, eat regularly at Korean restaurants and are virtually inseparable from our smart phones and accessories made by Samsung and other Korean manufacturers. Goods and services originating from Korea are becoming as mainstream as the Korean-American owned businesses have been for many decades now.

I mentioned that I was in Korea last month. Unfortunately my trip had to be cut short a few days because of my mother's rapidly failing health, and due to the compassion of our hosts I was able to return to America so that I could be with her as she died. For that I am forever grateful.

The time that I had there was memorable, however. We saw some great sites, including the site of the sinking of the vessel Cheonan (CHE-O-NAN) by a North Korea torpedo in March of 2010 at South Korea's Naval base. We also saw the National Athletes Training Center in Seoul, where I had the great honor of meeting some Olympic archers who are training for the 2016 games in Rio. I happen to be an avid archer myself, so it was very kind of our hosts to make sure I got a dose of my favorite sport while in Korea.

We had a meeting with a high-level official with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hakjoon Kim, and also visited the Korea History Foundation. One of our most productive meetings was with the Korean International Trade Association, where its president Mr. Han Duksoo and I talked about potential future trade opportunities with companies in the state of Washington. It's these kinds of meetings that serve to promote good relations and often bear fruit later on.

Another highlight was our visit to the Insadong Market in Seoul, a very popular place to shop. Again, I would like to thank the Korean Consulate of Seattle for hosting our mission.

We hear too much about North Korea these days, in fact just about every time their brutal dictator leader Kim Jong-un opens his mouth it makes the news. Most of us do not care about his birthday or about his being best friends with Dennis Rodman.

We do care, deeply in fact, about the fate of captive American missionary Kenneth Bae who is from this very area who has been imprisoned for 14 months now by the regime of this brutal terrorist state. Our hearts go out to his family and we can only hope that he will be released soon.

We are especially vulnerable here in Washington to the instability of North Korea under a terrorist regime, but are very grateful to our friends in the Republic of Korea are among our strongest friends and allies.

Tonight we celebrate all that is good about Korea and the Koreans we live here. We celebrate the strong contributions of Americans like Senator Shin and Representative Cindy Ryu, and the many people of Korean descent who have made outstanding contributions in science, engineering, business, education, technology and the arts. We honor our friends in the Republic of Korea and the strong and lasting influence of Korean culture within the borders of our state.

Korea and the state of Washington have a great and lasting future together. Today, on this seventh Korean-American Day, we stand together and pledge that we will work in tandem for peace, prosperity and for continued understanding that has spanned so many miles of the Pacific for so long.