

**Statement of The Honorable Michelle Park Steel
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 20, 2026**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and honorable Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is the honor of a lifetime to be President Trump's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me to serve the American people.

I want to thank my family: my husband, Shawn; my daughters, Cheyenne and Siobhan; their husbands, Wolff and Johnny; my sister, Joey; and my four adorable grandchildren.

Today, I am reminded of a Korean saying:

고생 끝에 낙이 온다

“After hardship comes joy.”

Like so many Korean-Americans, our story began in hardship. My parents fled North Korea during the Korean War. They started a family in South Korea, a place made safe and free because more than 36,000 Americans gave their lives in defense of freedom.

While we were living in Japan, my father encouraged me to study in the United States, which he saw as the beacon of hope, freedom and prosperity.

He was right. English is my third language, and only in a country like ours could someone like me serve their community in Congress.

During my two terms in Congress, I worked to strengthen our national security, preserve economic prosperity, protect American workers and businesses, and advance human rights, including on the Ways and Means Committee.

If confirmed, I will continue that commitment by strengthening our alliance with the Republic of Korea.

For more than seven decades, the Alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea has served as the linchpin of peace, security, and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

Our combined defense posture, anchored by the 28,500 members of U.S. Forces Korea and reinforced by America's extended nuclear deterrent, remains ironclad. It is the bedrock of our Alliance.

President Trump opened a historic new chapter in our Alliance with his 2025 state visit to Gyeongju. The 2025 U.S.–ROK Joint Fact Sheet outlined a once-in-a-generation upgrade to our security cooperation. As part of this modernization, Seoul has pledged to expand its defense spending and to bolster our shared deterrence posture.

Our governments cooperate closely to respond to the DPRK's unlawful weapons programs, its expanding cybercrime operations, and its deepening military cooperation with Russia. We are strengthening a vital trilateral partnership alongside Japan to defend a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

South Korea is one of America's most important trading partners and a critical investor in rebuilding American industry. In 2025, we welcomed the U.S.-ROK Strategic Trade and Investment Deal, in which South Korea commits to invest \$350 billion in U.S. strategic industries and reduce barriers to U.S. exports. American companies operating in Korea deserve the same market access that Korean companies enjoy in the United States.

The United States and the Republic of Korea share one of the world's strongest Alliances, and I look forward to supporting the next phase in our great Alliance. I look forward to your questions.