

in Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to meet with North Korean officials and gather first-hand information about the current situation in that volatile region. This was a precedent-setting visit to North Korea by a Congressional delegation of this size, seniority, and breadth of experience.

The delegation was led by HPSCI Chairman Porter J. Goss (R-FL). The other Members of Congress comprising the CODEL were Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Bill McCollum (R-FL), Jane Harman (D-CA), Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA), Charles F. Bass (R-NH) and Jim Gibbons (R-NV). In addition to their assignment on the HPSCI, these members represent a wealth of experience on relevant issues based on their other committee assignments.

The delegation's interlocutors were headed by Mr. Kang Sokju, First Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and Mr. Li Hyong-chol, Director of American Affairs of the MFA. All discussions took place in the Pyongyang region. Despite repeated requests by CODEL members, the delegation was unable to travel to famine-stricken areas where it had hoped to determine the extent of the problem and investigate the system used for distributing food aid.

In several formal and informal working sessions with the North Koreans, the CODEL made the following points:

The United States has a strong and abiding national security interest in helping defuse tension on the Korean peninsula. The four party talks should be responsibly pursued;

North Korea must cease its sale of advanced weaponry, missile systems, and supporting technologies to Iran and other "rouge" states;

The United States stands firmly behind its military and security commitments to the Republic of Korea;

North Korea must fully honor its commitments in the nuclear arena, as specified in the Agreed Framework, including allowing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) challenge inspections and comply with its responsibilities to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO);

North Korea's cooperation in helping locate and return the remains of several United States military personnel killed in the Korean War is a positive step. Such steps must be continued and expanded;

Provocative acts such as those that occurred in the Demilitarized Zone on July 16, 1997 are counterproductive to cooperation and understanding;

To participate fully in the opportunities of the world community, North Korea must open up its society; and

North Korea must make its food distribution to the civilian population fully transparent and verifiable, in order to facilitate the United States' consideration of additional assistance. The food aid cannot be diverted to the military.

Though the visit was carefully managed by the North Korean hosts, the tenor of the discussions was cordial but candid. Frank discussion about mutual mistrust occurred on several items of a lengthy agenda. The delegation believes talks were constructive in demonstrating bipartisan support for United States policy to encourage North Korea to engage in honest and good faith negotiations to lessen tensions in the region.

The North Koreans were focused on seeing the United States sanctions lifted and the need for additional food assistance. In addition, the North Koreans stated their refusal to abandon their centralized political and economic systems. The delegation emphasized that Americans are a compassionate people, generous in their willingness to alleviate suffering, but who seek assurance that food relief is used to feed those North Korean

people most in need. The delegation stressed that sanctions must be negotiated as part of a larger political package involving proliferation and other security matters.

The delegation will provide President Clinton, Speaker Gingrich, Minority Leader Gephardt, and the Department of State with a full report of the substance of its discussions and its impressions. The delegation concludes that opportunity for further constructive dialogue exists and will confer with other Congressional committees of jurisdiction.

The CODEL travelled to North Korea as part of a trip to Asia, which includes visits to Beijing, China; Tokyo, Japan; and Seoul, South Korea. The delegation returns to the United States on August 15.

THE HOUSTON COMETS WIN THE FIRST WNBA CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BLUNT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, can my colleagues believe it? The Houston Comets will see them at breakfast. The WNBA champions. "Can you believe it?"

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud woman and proud Houstonian. Move over Michael. Here we come, Magic, Bird, and Hakiem. Women's professional basketball got a league of their own and the Houston Comets are the new champions of the new world of women's basketball.

Houston is now the "Clutch City" as well as "Coop City" as the Comets, led by the regular season and championship game's most valuable player, Cynthia Cooper, beat the New York Liberty 65 to 51 before a sellout crowd and a national television audience at the Summit to claim the title of America's first Women's National Basketball Association Champion.

Mr. Speaker, it was a game my 17-year-old daughter Erica went crazy over. But, my 11-year-old son, Jason, did as well.

WNBA Coach of the Year Van Chancellor had brand new Mom, Sheryl Swoopes, work her heart out, and Wanda Guyton, after a heck of a season, may have been hurt, but Janeth Arcain, Tina Thompson, and Patty Jo Hedges, Tammy Jackson, and Kim Perrot, as well as "Coop," were cooking on all cylinders and served up some home cooking for the Lady Libertys to give the Houston fans and basketball fans all over the Nation the memories that they will forever and forever remember.

Some of these women have spent years and years playing on the hardwoods of Europe, and now they can come home and strut their stuff before their own family and friends and fans.

It was so very special for Cynthia Cooper to be able to play on her home court so that her own dear mom could see her playing, a mom that has been a strong supporter of hers throughout the years.

This championship is an historic occasion, and not just for women's sports

and not just as the fruition of our laws under title IX, and we have got to keep fighting to ensure that young people, young women, have the opportunity of equal access to sports and sportsmanship and playing the game well.

Saturday, August 30, was an historic occasion for the game of basketball. They have now come to their own. Women are playing the real game. Basketball is a game that has a long tradition of both women and men's play in our high schools and colleges. I have watched them for many years, and there is a deep respect for the game on our playgrounds and in our gyms. And, yes, it does teach character, it provides role models, and, yes, it teaches you how to play the game of life.

I dare say that it is probably the most popularly played game in our Nation, and it is fast becoming the most popular game in the world.

That championship game completes the cycle of respect and closes a hoop, if you will, on making the game of basketball a complete game. It is complete in the sense that now women, women who played for years and years, who have had to travel the globe just to practice their trade, who have the determination and devotion to play the game at the highest levels, have the respect of being able to make a living from their basketball skills in their own country where the game was invented and has evolved to the highest levels.

The Houston Comets, Mr. Speaker, they gave it all to Houston. They went to charities. They made themselves available to our schoolchildren. They were great. The Houston Comets are now a part of our history as a basketball nation and a basketball world. Those players will be forever mentioned and remembered as the first, the very first women of basketball.

Shine on Comets. We love you. Many of them who played their hearts out in the 1996 Olympics now have this great honor.

I am obviously bursting with pride as a Houstonian to salute our champion, the Houston Comets. The most fitting place for them now is to go to the House. That is the White House. So I have written and spoken to the White House regarding a visit with President Clinton here in Washington, D.C., at the White House to honor their historic achievement.

Mr. Speaker, to the Houston Comets let me say to them, and all Houstonians, wherever they may be, the Houston Comets, they really played the real game. Mr. Speaker, they are truly our real heroes. Mr. Speaker, see you at breakfast with the Houston Comets. Congratulations to them all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. BISHOP] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BISHOP addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALDINE
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], my colleague from Houston. That championship game last week was exciting not only for those of us who are from Houston, but all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be here on the floor of the House and pleased to announce the high performance rating for a school district in Houston, Aldine Independent School District. It was recognized by the Texas Education Agency for the quality of their program.

As the parent of two graduates of Aldine schools, and my wife who teaches in the Aldine schools, and representing, along with the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], about half the district, it is a pleasure to see the school district receive the recognition that it deserves.

According to the latest data released by the Texas Education Agency, Aldine ranks among the Texas high performance school districts. This rating was based on 1996-1997 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, our Statewide TAAS scores, attendance records, and low dropout rate.

Aldine is the largest recognized school in the State with a student enrollment of approximately 48,000 students. To earn a recognized rating, 75 percent of all students in each students group, district-wide, must pass each TAAS subject area. In addition, the dropout rate for all students cannot exceed 3.5 percent. They must also maintain an attendance rate of at least 94 percent.

Only a few schools have reached the high performing level of recognized or exemplary and Aldine is one of the four "recognized" school districts in Harris County, TX.

By achieving a recognized designation from the State, it is a great honor for everybody in the school district. But it is more than that. It recognizes each individual's hard work and commitment to education.

More specifically, a special thank you for the dedication of the curriculum program directors, principals, the teachers, the teaching assistants, and the students. It is a collaborative effort by these individuals which guarantee the continued success of the school district.

One of the reasons for the success of the Aldine Independent School District is their curriculum. The staff development focuses on teamwork and giving teachers of all subject areas the chance to support academic success. Each teacher in the district receives the same materials containing the same common strategies throughout the district. Program directors from different

subject areas then work with the teachers on integrating those common strategies into their curriculum.

The curriculum is based on the continual assessment of student performance, analysis of student performance data, and the development of benchmarks, targets, and then implementation. It is a structured system to ensure that the skills are mastered and applied to each student's learning.

Not only has there been success for Aldine Independent School District, but there has also been success for the State of Texas. Students across the State of Texas have improved their performance on TAAS testing, TAAS is a statewide assessment of skills, from 55 percent in 1994 to 73 percent in 1997. In comparison, Aldine ISD students have improved their mastery from 49 percent in 1994, to 75 percent in 1997.

For the State of Texas as a whole, the figures show an increase in the number of highest performing districts and a decrease in the number of lowest performing districts statewide, despite tougher performance standards for the years 1996 and 1997. Again, each year the performance standards get tougher, as we know, the worldwide competition gets tougher.

Texas has the most high school seniors taking the SAT test than any State in the country, at 48 percent, and these scores have continued to improve. Texas has brought education to the forefront. It is a priority for everyone, and that is an important distinction.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here this evening and recognize the contribution and the success of the Aldine Independent School District to the education of our children.

LISTENING TO THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. HULSHOF] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, continuing the tradition that we have tried to begin as newly elected Republican Members focusing on positive success stories across the district, as you know just as our Nation's children are returning to schools all across this great land, we lawmakers are returning here to Washington and I think probably sharing some of the mixed emotions that our schoolchildren have as far as returning here to this establishment.

What we do here, of course, is very important with the bills and the debates and our struggles here. But I think what we do pales in comparison to the real life struggles that our constituents, the American people, are facing each and every day.

We talk about this 4-week period of time here in August, or just as August past, as a recess or a vacation. And I

know many of the newly elected Members did not consider it as a vacation, as a recess. It was a very good time to get back home to really probe the minds and listen. And I think if anything that we have been able to accomplish that has been the most fruitful is that we stop shouting long enough in this body to listen to what the American people have to say.

And when we began to listen to those men and women that have been struggling to keep a roof overhead and keep food on the table, what we heard them tell us is that they were working longer and harder and yet had less to show for it at the end of the month and wondering where their tax monies had gone.

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Basically what I was hearing, in a series of town hall meetings, was that the people back home in Missouri's Ninth Congressional District wanted us to change our ways here in Washington so that they would not have to change their ways back home.

I know certainly that there has been a wide difference of opinion on the budget agreement that we put together. Certainly future political candidates, I was flipping around the channels and watching C-SPAN and some of the speeches where future politicians or those seeking higher office have talked about what we did in a negative way. Yet I did not sense that at all. A series of town meetings in the Ninth Congressional District of Missouri were overwhelmingly positive.

The folks that came out recognized that we were on the path to a smaller, smarter government. They were appreciative of the fact that the centerpiece of our budget agreement, the tax relief package, was a child credit that will benefit the parents of 41 million children across this country, and the fact that nearly 2 million households will not have a Federal income tax liability just because of this \$500 child credit.

They were appreciative of the child health initiative that we have commenced, that we put together in this budget plan to help the Nation's most vulnerable that are uninsured. And I tried to explain and made clear that this was not a new Federal entitlement that we had imposed but a way to reach out with local innovative solutions to this national problem of uninsured children.

They were certainly appreciative, as education is very much on the minds of the folks in the Ninth Congressional District, that we have education tuition credits that we are putting in place so that children that dream of college can actually get there, and those that have been laboring under the weight of a student loan might have a little bit of his or her burden eased by allowing the deduction of interest on that student loan.

Certainly we recognize that a strong economy is vital because as we help educate and invest in our children, the