

'An unimaginable honor. I will be bridge between U.S. and Korea'

Andy Kim, first Korean American to enter U.S. Senate, 'Will play role in maintaining and strengthening U.S.-Korea alliance'

Rep. Andy Kim (D-NJ), the first Korean American to serve in the U.S. Senate, was sworn in and officially began his Senate career on the opening day of the 119th U.S. Congress on Jan. 3 (local time).

Kim took the oath of office in the Old Senate Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., in front of Vice President Kamala Harris, who serves as president of the Senate, with his wife and two sons looking on, his left hand on a Bible and his right hand raised.

Kim's father, Kim Jung-han, the first generation of his family to immigrate to the United States, watched from a wheelchair as his son was sworn in, and Kim introduced him to Harris.

Kim Jung-han, who faced health challenges as a child in South Korea (polio) and poverty that even left him experiencing homelessness, emigrated to the U.S., where he attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University before dedicating his life to curing cancer and Alzheimer's as a genetic engineer.

"I am humbly sworn in to serve the state that raised me in the U.S. Senate," Rep. Kim said in a statement sent to Yonhap earlier in the day. "As the son of Korean immigrants, I could never have imagined this honor growing up."

"We have important work ahead of us in the 119th Congress to bring about the changes needed to make our democracy work for the people and give everyone a chance at the American dream," Kim said.

"A strong U.S.A. requires strong partnerships and alliances, and I will remain committed to building bridges between the United States and South Korea and advancing our shared prosperity and security," he emphasized.

The election of the first Korean American U.S. senator marks a significant milestone in the 120-year history of Korean immigration to the United States. Kim serves on a total of four standing committees, including the



U.S. Sen. Andy Kim speaks during an interview with the media from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Korea, at the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 7.

Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

'If Trump tries to withdraw U.S. troops from South Korea, there will be bipartisan backlash'

In a Jan. 8 press conference with the media from countries in the Asia-Pacific region at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., Kim said if Trump attempts or suggests reducing or withdrawing U.S. troops from South Korea after taking office, "There will be a very strong bipartisan backlash against it once again (following his first term in the U.S.)," and expressed his willingness to play what role he can in the Senate to maintain and strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance.

"(The alliance) will make us stronger not only in military terms but also in economy and trade," Kim said. "The strategic alliance is often discussed only in terms of military needs, but I will push for the technology sector to be one of the key elements of the relationship."

"I'm also looking to strengthen South Korea's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region," he said. In this regard, he pointed out the U.S. military



U.S. Sen. Andy Kim (L) takes the oath of office in front of Vice President Kamala Harris, who is also president of the Senate, in the Old Senate Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 3.

presence in South Korea is “Not only about protecting South Korea but also about acting as a deterrent to the People’s Republic of China regarding the Taiwan Strait. That’s why I get frustrated when I hear people like President-elect Trump talk about it as if we’re only there to defend South Korea, and we’re not getting anything out of it.

“I hope to serve as a bridge between the U.S. and South Korea,” Kim said. “I want to assure the Korean people that the United States will stand by South Korea no matter who is in charge of South Korea.”

Recalling that Trump had said in a press conference the day before that he would not promise to rule out the use of military and economic coercion to take control of Panama and Greenland, Kim said he would “strongly confront” Trump if he used coercive measures against South Korea and other partners in Asia after taking office.

Kim, who is a member of the standing committee in charge of the Commerce Department, which is responsible for attracting Korean companies to invest in the U.S., pointed out that if Trump were to withdraw subsidies to Korean companies based on the previous Joe Biden administration’s achievements, such as the CHIPS and Science Act, he would face backlash and difficulties due to the resultant hindering of job creation in states like Georgia.

‘Stabilization in Korea is priority; the situation should not be used for political ambitions’


When asked for his views on the situation in South Korea, Kim said, “This is a really important time for stability. This is not the time for certain people to take advantage of the situation for their own political ambitions.

“I hope that politicians in South Korea will understand that the people are

watching every word they say with a microscope, and that they should be very careful and thoughtful about what they say,” Kim advised.

“I am concerned about the current situation (of political confrontation in South Korea),” he said, “But I am also somewhat reassured by the resilience of South Korea’s democratic process, and I hope that the situation will be resolved peacefully through the democratic process.”

In terms of his top policy priorities as a first-term senator, Kim cited lowering the cost of living, restoring trust in a broken government and political system, strengthening national security and stabilizing supply chains for Americans, and, as an Asian American, focusing on issues of discrimination, hate and immigration.

Asked what his parents, who are first-generation immigrants, told him when he was sworn in as a senator, Kim said: “To think not only about what you’re going to get from this country but also what you’re going to give back. For us, the American dream is not about greed and accumulating maximum wealth and comfort but about influence, helping and supporting (others).” 

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