

## NEWS ADVISORY

### Committee on International Relations

U.S. House of Representatives

Henry Hyde (R-IL), Chairman

Contact: (202) 225-5021

Thursday, November 16, 2006

For IMMEDIATE Release

# Hyde Awarded South Korea's Highest Civilian Honor

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Today, U.S. Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-IL), Chairman of the Committee on International Relations, received the Republic of Korea's highest civilian honor, the Order of Diplomatic Service Merit Gwanghwa Medal, for his demonstrations of friendship and solidarity contributing toward the forging of strong bonds between the United States and South Korea.

In a ceremony in Washington, South Korean Ambassador Lee Tae-Sik thanked Chairman Hyde for his service, stating:

Chairman Hyde, thank you for the attention you have given to the issues facing the Korean Peninsula during your final months in Congress. It is all the more meaningful and special that the final hearing before your committee was on the current challenges facing the Peninsula and the region. Your constant attention and care to these important and often complex matters bridged and bonded our two nations together. The Order of Diplomatic Service Merit Gwanghwa Medal carries with it an appreciation for your career not just as a legislator, but as a diplomat and unofficial ambassador for the United States. It is presented to you as an expression of friendship, admiration, and gratitude.

Chairman Hyde expressed his deepest gratitude for the honor that the government and people of the Republic of Korea have bestowed upon him today. He stated that when he visited his former Commander General MacArthur's statue above Incheon's harbor this past summer, it "reminded him of the enduring ties which bind our two peoples." Hyde said, "There is an old Korean proverb which states, 'Even a sheet of paper seems lighter when two people lift it together.'"

Lee's statement is printed below in its entirety:

REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY LEE TAE-SIK,  
AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH KOREA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE ORDER OF DIPLOMATIC SERVICE MERIT  
GWANGHWA MEDAL PRESENTATION CEREMONY  
TO U.S. REPRESENTATIVE HENRY HYDE

NOVEMBER 16, 2006

WASHINGTON, D.C.

I would like to take this opportunity on this auspicious occasion to offer a few words to congratulate Chairman Henry Hyde on receiving the Republic of Korea's highest civilian honor, the Order of Diplomatic Service Merit Gwanghwa Medal.

In the Korean language, "Gwanghwa" literally translates into "May the light of enlightenment blanket the world." As those of you who have visited Seoul will know, "Gwanghwa-Mun" is the main gate to the ancient royal palace that we consider to be the symbolic heart of Korea. Consequently, those who are honored with the Gwanghwa Medal are invited to enter the heart of our nation. Thus, with this Order, Chairman Hyde is joined to hearts and minds of the Korean people forever.

In more than 30 years of service representing his Illinois constituents in the United States Congress, Chairman Hyde has distinguished himself as a man of principle, determination, compassion, and dedication.

In just a few short weeks, Chairman Hyde will wind up his career in the U.S. Congress and open a new chapter in his life. We want him to know that, through his words and deeds, he made not just Washington, but the entire world, a better place.

This Order, which I will have the honor to present shortly, conveys the gratitude of the people and the Government of Korea for the friendship and solidarity he has demonstrated us over the years. As many of you know, only a few months ago, Chairman Hyde made one final trip to Korea that we will all remember for a long time to come.

While in Korea, Chairman Hyde delivered a memorable farewell speech at a wreath-laying ceremony at the statue of General Douglas MacArthur in Incheon. His remarks in front of the monument, that was erected by the Korean people to his old commander, were spoken from the heart, filled with emotion and yet emblazoned with wisdom and knowledge accumulated over decades of public service. And as my good friend Ambassador Chris Hill aptly pointed out when testifying before the International Relations Committee, this speech ought to be required reading for all those who are working to strengthen the Korea-U.S. alliance partnership.

On Capitol Hill, Chairman Hyde has been a tireless advocate and champion for human rights and freedom for everyone. Most recently, he saw to it that a resolution remembering the suffering of the "comfort women" in Asia during the 1930s and 1940s was passed unanimously by the International Relations Committee. He did so because he cares about history, about truth, and about humanity and the sanctity of each individual, no matter how poor, how old, or how influential -- and even though many pressing matters were on his desk and coming before the Committee.

Chairman Hyde, thank you for the attention you have given to the issues facing the Korean Peninsula during your final months in Congress. It is all the more meaningful and special that the final hearing before your committee was on the current challenges facing the Peninsula and the region. Your constant attention and care to these important and often complex matters bridged and bonded our two nations together.

The Order of Diplomatic Service Merit Gwanghwa Medal carries with it an appreciation for your career not just as a legislator, but as a diplomat and unofficial ambassador for the United States. It is presented to you as an expression of friendship, admiration, and gratitude.

In closing, and on a more personal note, I want you to know how much your wisdom, your judgment, and the warmth of your heart on issues pertaining to Korea, Asia and beyond have been greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed. You leave behind you very large footprints for those who follow to fill. As I think about your career in the U.S. Congress, I am reminded of the words of another great statesman from Illinois, President Abraham Lincoln, who said: "The probability that we may fail in struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just."

May God bless you and your family with good health and continued prosperity as you return to

Illinois.

Thank you.

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