

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 261

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation

AN ACT

To amend the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to prohibit the Secretary of Commerce from prohibiting, or requiring any permit or other authorization for, the installation, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if such activities have been authorized by a Federal or State agency.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Undersea Cable Pro-
5 tection Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING**
7 **PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR,**
8 **UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHOR-**
9 **IZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.**

10 The National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C.
11 1431 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 310
12 the following:

13 **“SEC. 310A. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING**
14 **PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR,**
15 **UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHOR-**
16 **IZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.**

17 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other pro-
18 vision of this Act, the Secretary may not prohibit, or re-
19 quire any permit, including any special use permit, or
20 other authorization for, the installation, continued pres-
21 ence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of under-
22 sea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if
23 a license, lease, or permit has been issued by a Federal
24 or State agency, and is in effect, authorizing such installa-

1 tion, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair,
2 or recovery.

3 “(b) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.—Nothing in this
4 section shall be construed as altering existing require-
5 ments regarding interagency cooperation under section
6 304(d) in any Federal agency action described in that sec-
7 tion and involving the installation, continued presence, op-
8 eration, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber
9 optic cables in a national marine sanctuary.”.

10 **SEC. 3. REMOVING RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVITIES COV-**
11 **ERED BY SANCTUARY SPECIAL USE PERMITS.**

12 Section 310(c) of National Marine Sanctuaries Act
13 (16 U.S.C. 1441(c)) is amended—

14 (1) in paragraph (1), by adding “and” at the
15 end;

16 (2) by striking paragraphs (2) and (3); and

17 (3) by redesignating paragraph (4) as para-
18 graph (2).

Passed the House of Representatives February 11,
2026.

Attest: KEVIN F. MCCUMBER,
Clerk.