

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2236

To establish a comprehensive United States Government initiative to build the capacity of young leaders and entrepreneurs in Africa, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 10, 2025

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To establish a comprehensive United States Government initiative to build the capacity of young leaders and entrepreneurs in Africa, and for other purposes.

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 TITLES.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Young African Leaders
5 Initiative Act of 2025” or the “YALI Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

1 (1) the Young African Leaders Initiative,
2 launched in 2010, is a signature effort to invest in
3 the next generation of African leaders;

4 (2) Africa is a continent of strategic importance
5 and it is vital for the United States to support
6 strong and enduring partnerships with the next gen-
7 eration of African leaders;

8 (3) the United States Government should
9 prioritize investments to build the capacity of emerg-
10 ing young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, in-
11 cluding through efforts that—

12 (A) enhance leadership skills;

13 (B) encourage entrepreneurship;

14 (C) strengthen public administration and
15 the role of civil society;

16 (D) enhance peace and security in their re-
17 spective countries of origin and across Africa;
18 and

19 (E) connect young African leaders con-
20 tinently and globally across the private, civic,
21 and public sectors;

22 (4) youth in Africa have a positive impact on
23 efforts to foster economic growth, improve public
24 sector transparency and governance, and counter ex-

1 tremism, and should be an area of focus for United
2 States outreach on the African continent; and

3 (5) the Secretary of State should—

4 (A) increase the number of fellows from
5 Africa participating in the Mandela Washington
6 Fellowship above the estimated 700 fellows who
7 participated during fiscal year 2024; and

8 (B) identify additional ways to connect
9 YALI alumni to United States public and pri-
10 vate resources and institutions.

11 **SEC. 3. YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE PROGRAM.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Young
13 African Leaders Initiative (referred to in this section as
14 “YALI”), which shall be carried out by the Secretary of
15 State.

16 (b) PURPOSE.—YALI shall seek to build the capacity
17 of young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa in the
18 areas of business, civic engagement, or public administra-
19 tion, including through efforts that—

20 (1) support young African leaders by offering
21 professional development, training, and networking
22 opportunities, particularly in the areas of leadership,
23 innovation, civic engagement, elections, human
24 rights, entrepreneurship, good governance, peace and
25 security, and public administration; and

1 (2) provide increased economic and technical
2 assistance to young African leaders to promote eco-
3 nomic growth, strengthen ties between United States
4 and African businesses, build resilience to predatory
5 lending practices, and improve capacity in key eco-
6 nomic areas such as tendering, bidding, and contract
7 negotiations, budget management and oversight,
8 anti-corruption, and establishment of clear policy
9 and regulatory practices.

10 (c) FELLOWSHIPS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—YALI shall support the par-
12 ticipation in the United States in the Mandela
13 Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders
14 of fellows from Africa who—

15 (A) are between 25 and 35 years of age;

16 (B) have demonstrated strong capabilities
17 in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service,
18 and leadership; and

19 (C) have had a positive impact in their
20 communities, organizations, or institutions.

21 (2) OVERSIGHT.—The fellowships described in
22 paragraph (1) shall be overseen by the Secretary of
23 State through the Bureau of Educational and Cul-
24 tural Affairs.

1 (3) ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary of State shall
2 establish and publish—

3 (A) eligibility criteria for participation as a
4 fellow under paragraph (1); and

5 (B) criteria for determining which eligible
6 applicants will be selected.

7 (d) RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES.—Subject to the ap-
8 proval of the Secretary of State, United States citizens
9 may—

10 (1) engage in reciprocal exchanges in connec-
11 tion with alumni of the fellowship described in sub-
12 section (c); and

13 (2) collaborate on projects with such fellowship
14 alumni.

15 (e) REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CENTERS AND NET-
16 WORKS.—The Administrator of the United States Agency
17 for International Development shall establish—

18 (1) not fewer than 4 regional leadership centers
19 in sub-Saharan Africa to offer in-person and online
20 training throughout the year on business and entre-
21 preneurship, civic leadership, and public manage-
22 ment to young African leaders who—

23 (A) are between 18 and 35 years of age;

24 (B) have demonstrated strong capabilities
25 in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service

and leadership, and peace-building and conflict resolution; and

(C) have had a positive impact in their communities, organizations, or institutions; and

(2) an online network that provides information and courses on, and connections with leaders in, the private and public sectors of Africa.

(f) ACTIVITIES.—

(1) UNITED STATES-BASED ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall oversee all United States-based activities carried out under YALI, including—

(A) the participation of Mandela Washington Fellows in a 6-week Leadership Institute at a United States educational institution in business, civic engagement, or public management, including academic sessions, site visits, professional networking opportunities, leadership training, community service, and organized cultural activities; and

(B) the participation by Mandela Washington fellows in an annual Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit, to provide such Fellows the opportunity to meet with United States

1 leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit
2 sectors.

3 (2) AFRICA-BASED ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary
4 of State, in coordination with the Administrator for
5 the United States Agency for International Develop-
6 ment and the heads of other relevant Federal de-
7 partments and agencies, should continue to support
8 YALI activities in sub-Saharan Africa, including—

9 (A) continued leadership training and
10 other professional development opportunities for
11 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young Af-
12 rican Leaders alumni upon their return to their
13 home countries, including online courses, tech-
14 nical assistance, and access to funding;

15 (B) training for young African leaders at
16 regional leadership centers established pursuant
17 to subsection (e), and through online and in-
18 person courses offered by such centers; and

19 (C) opportunities for networking and en-
20 gagement with—

21 (i) alumni of the Mandela Washington
22 Fellowship for Young African Leaders;

23 (ii) alumni of programs at regional
24 leadership centers established pursuant to
25 subsection (e);

(iii) United States and like-minded diplomatic missions, business leaders, and others as appropriate; and

(iv) where practicable and appropriate, other United States-funded regional leadership programs, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAIA), the Young Pacific Leaders (YPL), and the Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative (YTIIL), and through Department of State programs such as the Community Engagement Exchange Program and other initiatives.

(3) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and the heads of other relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall carry out this subsection by seeking to partner with the private sector—

(A) to pursue public-private partnerships;

(B) to leverage private sector expertise;

(C) to expand networking opportunities;

and

1 (D) to identify funding opportunities and
2 fellowship and employment opportunities for
3 YALI.

4 (g) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than 180
5 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
6 retary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of
7 the United States Agency for International Development
8 and the heads of other relevant Federal departments and
9 agencies, shall submit a plan to the appropriate congres-
10 sional committees for implementing YALI, including—

11 (1) a description of clearly defined program
12 goals, targets, and planned outcomes for each year
13 and for the duration of implementation of the pro-
14 gram;

15 (2) a strategy to monitor and evaluate the pro-
16 gram and progress made toward achieving such
17 goals, targets, and planned outcomes; and

18 (3) a strategy to ensure the program is pro-
19 moting United States foreign policy goals in Africa,
20 including ensuring that the program is clearly
21 branded, paired with robust public diplomacy efforts,
22 and incorporates diversity among participants as
23 practicable, including countries and communities in
24 Africa facing economic distress, civil conflict,
25 marginalization, and other challenges.

1 (h) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for
3 the following 4 years, the Secretary of State, in coordina-
4 tion with the Administrator of the United States Agency
5 for International Development, shall submit to the appro-
6 priate congressional committees, and publish in a publicly
7 accessible, internet-based form, a report that includes—

8 (1) a description of the progress made toward
9 achieving the goals, targets, and planned outcomes
10 described in subsection (g)(1), including an overview
11 of the program implemented in the previous year
12 and an estimated number of beneficiaries;

13 (2) an assessment of how YALI is contributing
14 to and promoting United States-Africa relations,
15 particularly in areas of increased private sector in-
16 vestment, trade promotion, support to civil society,
17 improved public administration, promoting peace
18 and security, and fostering entrepreneurship and
19 youth empowerment;

20 (3) recommendations for improvements or
21 changes to YALI and the implementation plan, if
22 any, that would improve their effectiveness during
23 subsequent years of YALI's implementation; and

24 (4) for the first report submitted under this
25 subsection, an assessment of the feasibility of ex-

1 panding YALI to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya,
2 and Egypt.

3 (i) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term “ap-
4 propriate congressional committees” means—

5 (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
6 Senate;

7 (2) the Committee on Appropriations of the
8 Senate;

9 (3) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
10 House of Representatives; and

11 (4) the Committee on Appropriations of the
12 House of Representatives.

13 (j) SUNSET.—This section shall cease to have effect
14 on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment
15 of this Act.

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