

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3247

To direct the President to develop and submit to Congress a strategy to protect United States interests in the Arctic region, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 14, 2017

Mr. BERA introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Energy and Commerce, Science, Space, and Technology, and Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To direct the President to develop and submit to Congress a strategy to protect United States interests in the Arctic region, 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 TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protect United States
5 Security in the Arctic Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The United States has important economic,
2 security, and national defense interests in the Arctic
3 region.

4 (2) The United States Government has issued
5 several key reports and strategies on the Arctic re-
6 gion over the last four years, including—

7 (A) the Department of Defense Report to
8 Congress on Strategy to Protect United States
9 National Security Interests in the Arctic Region
10 (December 2016);

11 (B) the 2015 Year In Review: Progress
12 Report on the Implementation of the National
13 Strategy for the Arctic Region (March 2016);

14 (C) the Implementation Plan for the Na-
15 tional Strategy for the Arctic Region (January
16 30, 2014); and

17 (D) the National Strategy for the Arctic
18 Region (May 2013), which set forth the United
19 States Government’s strategic priorities for the
20 Arctic region.

21 (3) According to the Council on Foreign Rela-
22 tions, the Arctic region is warming at double the
23 rate of the rest of the world, opening new routes for
24 ships and development of natural resources through-
25 out the Arctic region.

1 (4) The rapidly warming Arctic region threat-
2 ens fisheries and wildlife habitat, existing infrastruc-
3 ture and communities throughout Alaska, including
4 increased vulnerability to coastal erosion. Alaska na-
5 tive communities are particularly vulnerable to the
6 changing climate.

7 (5) Given these developments, the United
8 States needs to bolster its infrastructure and assets
9 in the Arctic region to safeguard its strategic inter-
10 ests, defend its national borders, protect the environ-
11 ment, and maintain its scientific and technological
12 leadership.

13 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

14 It is the sense of Congress that—

15 (1) the President should continue to convene
16 the Arctic Executive Steering Committee established
17 on January 21, 2015, pursuant to Executive Order
18 13689 (80 Fed. Reg. 6425; relating to enhancing co-
19 ordination of national efforts in the Arctic); and

20 (2) the United States should ratify the United
21 Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in order
22 to allow the United States to secure its claim to off-
23 shore resources present along the Arctic’s extended
24 continental shelf.

1 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY TO PROTECT UNITED STATES INTER-**
2 **ESTS IN THE ARCTIC REGION.**

3 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the
4 date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall de-
5 velop and submit to Congress a strategy to protect United
6 States interests in the Arctic region.

7 (b) **GOALS.**—The strategy required under subsection
8 (a) shall include the following goals:

9 (1) Improve telecommunications, navigation,
10 ocean and coastal mapping, and Coast Guard and
11 other infrastructure to support a sustained security
12 and emergency response presence for the State of
13 Alaska.

14 (2) Direct the United States representative to
15 the Arctic Council to use the voice and vote of the
16 United States to conduct increased confidence-build-
17 ing and cooperative security measures with the other
18 member countries of the Arctic Council.

19 (3) Support climate resilience efforts across the
20 Arctic region.

21 (4) Sustain robust research funding to under-
22 stand the ongoing climate changes in the Arctic re-
23 gion and the global impact of such changes.

24 (c) **USE OF PRIOR REPORTS AND STRATEGIES.**—The
25 strategy required under subsection (a) shall be informed
26 by the reports and strategies described in section 2(2) and

1 other relevant United States Government reports and
2 strategies regarding the Arctic region.

3 (d) COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED
4 STATES REPORT.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days after
6 the date of the enactment of the this Act, the Comp-
7 troller General of the United States shall submit to
8 the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate
9 and the House of Representatives, the Committee on
10 Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Sen-
11 ate, and the Committee on Transportation and In-
12 frastructure of the House of Representatives a re-
13 port assessing the cost and procurement schedule for
14 new United States icebreakers.

15 (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required in para-
16 graph (1) shall include an analysis of the following:

17 (A) The current status of the efforts of the
18 Coast Guard to acquire new icebreaking capa-
19 bility, including coordination through the Inte-
20 grated Program Office.

21 (B) Actions being taken by the Coast
22 Guard to incorporate key practices from other
23 nations that procure icebreakers to increase
24 knowledge and reduce costs and risks.

1 (C) The extent by which the cost and
2 schedule for building Coast Guard icebreakers
3 differs from those in other countries, if known.

4 (D) The extent that innovative acquisition
5 practices (such as multiyear funding and block
6 buys) may be applied to icebreaker acquisition
7 to reduce the cost and accelerate the schedule.

8 (E) A capacity replacement plan to miti-
9 gate a potential icebreaker capability gap if the
10 Polar Star cannot remain in service.

11 (F) Any other matters the Comptroller
12 General considers appropriate.

13 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION TO PROCURE COAST GUARD ICE-**
14 **BREAKERS.**

15 (a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—Consistent with the plan re-
16 quired by section 3523 of the National Defense Authoriza-
17 tion Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114–328), the
18 Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is
19 operating may enter into a contract to procure up to three
20 Coast Guard heavy icebreakers to defend United States
21 interests in the Arctic Region, beginning in fiscal year
22 2018.

23 (b) **LIABILITY SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATIONS.**—Any
24 contract entered into under subsection (a) shall provide
25 that—

1 (1) any obligation of the United States to make
2 a payment under the contract is subject to the avail-
3 ability of appropriations for that purpose; and

4 (2) the total liability to the Government for ter-
5 mination of such contract shall be limited to the
6 total amount of funding obligated under such con-
7 tract at the time of termination.

8 (c) REPORT.—Consistent with such section, the Sec-
9 retary shall report to the relevant congressional commit-
10 tees on plans of such department to—

11 (1) procure and sustain icebreakers in addition
12 to the vessels authorized by subsection (a); and

13 (2) ensure that at least three Coast Guard ice-
14 breakers are operational at all times.

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