

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6828

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

Mrs. WAGNER (for herself and Mr. CASTRO of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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 “Southeast Asia Strat-
5 egy Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Southeast Asia is the fulcrum of the Indo-
9 Pacific region and the Association of Southeast
10 Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional intergovern-

1 mental organization, remains the centerpiece of the
2 Indo-Pacific region's architecture.

3 (2) The United States has reaffirmed that the
4 security and sovereignty of its Southeast Asian allies
5 and partners, including a strong, independent
6 ASEAN, remain vital to the security, prosperity, and
7 stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

8 (3) The United States has committed to rein-
9 vigorating its longstanding security alliances with
10 the Philippines and Thailand, as well as bolstering
11 partnerships with a range of Southeast Asian na-
12 tions.

13 (4) A central element of United States strategy
14 for the Indo-Pacific region is strengthening United
15 States alliances and partnerships and working with
16 and through allies and partners to address common
17 challenges and to enhance shared capabilities.

18 (5) ASEAN member states are critical United
19 States security partners in preventing violent extre-
20 mism, protecting the freedom and openness of the
21 maritime domain, engaging in global peacekeeping
22 operations, and preventing the trafficking of weap-
23 ons of mass destruction.

24 (6) ASEAN member states are vital to the
25 prosperity of the United States economy and exports

1 to ASEAN economies support more than 500,000
2 jobs in the United States.

3 (7) The United States and ASEAN have re-
4 cently celebrated the 40th anniversary of their ties
5 and established a new strategic partnership that will
6 enhance cooperation across the economic, political-
7 security, and people-to-people pillars of the relation-
8 ship.

9 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 It is the policy of the United States to—

11 (1) cooperate more closely with the ASEAN
12 and ASEAN member states in the interest of pro-
13 moting peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pa-
14 cific region;

15 (2) establish and communicate a comprehensive
16 and focused strategy that articulates the role and
17 importance of Southeast Asia to the United States,
18 the value of the United States-ASEAN relationship,
19 the mutual interests of both parties, and the con-
20 crete and material benefits all nations derive from
21 strong United States engagement and leadership in
22 Southeast Asia; and

23 (3) affirm the importance of ASEAN centrality
24 and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving regional
25 architecture of the Indo-Pacific region.

1 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTHEAST**
2 **ASIA AND ASEAN.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
4 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
5 in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and the
6 Secretary of Defense, shall develop and submit to the ap-
7 propriate congressional committees a comprehensive and
8 focused multi-year strategy for engagement with South-
9 east Asia and ASEAN.

10 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy re-
11 quired by subsection (a) shall include the following:

12 (1) An identification of enduring United States
13 interests in Southeast Asia and efforts to bolster the
14 effectiveness of ASEAN as an independent and uni-
15 fied regional leader.

16 (2) An identification of—

17 (A) the future of Southeast Asian alli-
18 ances, partnerships, and multilateral engage-
19 ments, including efforts to expand security
20 interoperability and economic connectivity, and
21 build networks of allies and partners with other
22 United States partners in the Indo-Pacific re-
23 gion; and

24 (B) partners outside ASEAN that support
25 United States interests in Southeast Asia, such
26 as an ASEAN-centered and rules-based order,

1 including multilateral efforts to coordinate en-
2 gagement with ASEAN.

3 (3) A list of ongoing and planned initiatives and
4 programs to strengthen the United States partner-
5 ship with Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN
6 through trade, investment, energy, and economic
7 and political diplomacy in Southeast Asia and
8 through development and capacity building, includ-
9 ing efforts to improve the environment for private
10 sector-led economic development, public-private part-
11 nerships, infrastructure development, development of
12 the digital economy and technology, and other initia-
13 tives relating to education, disaster management,
14 and public health.

15 (4) An assessment of ongoing and planned ini-
16 tiatives to directly assist Southeast Asian countries
17 and ASEAN in developing institutional capabilities,
18 including with respect to enforcing international law
19 and sanctions, and initiatives to cooperate with
20 ASEAN as an institution in these areas.

21 (5) An assessment of ongoing and planned ef-
22 forts to promote and engage with Southeast Asian
23 countries on human rights and democracy, to
24 strengthen the rule of law, civil society, and trans-

parent governance, and to protect the integrity of elections and personal data from cyber threats.

(6) An assessment of ongoing and planned security cooperation, assistance, and training initiatives within Southeast Asian countries, including—

(A) maritime security and political initiatives for protecting the maritime commons and supporting international law and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea; and

(B) efforts to combat terrorism, human trafficking, piracy, and illegal fishing, and promote more open, reliable routes for trade.

(7) An assessment of ongoing and planned funding for relevant United States Government departments and agencies on the implementation of initiatives highlighted in the strategy and an identification of additional strategic, management, procedural, legal, personnel, and funding resources needed to fully implement the strategy.

(c) UPDATES TO STRATEGY.—The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Defense, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an updated strategy under subsection (a) for each of the four years following the year

1 in which the initial strategy is submitted under subsection
2 (a).

3 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
4 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
5 gressional committees” means—

6 (1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
7 Committee on Armed Services of the House of Rep-
8 resentatives; and

9 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
10 the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.

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