

They know that more than 60 percent of Americans disapprove of these tariffs. They know that the foreign governments don't pay these tariffs. They know that American families do. The farmers feel it. Small businesses feel it. Moms and dads feel it every time they see the prices at the grocery store.

What this is, we can go back and forth, but the American people are watching. They are the ultimate judges. They can see. They can hear. They know our friend. They know how Canada and Canadians are friendly to us in the United States of America, closest partners. Many Canadians have given their lives for us.

The American people can watch. What this simply does, this resolution, we will see. If you think that there is a crisis with Canada, then vote.

Still, the Constitution says it is the House of Representatives and the United States Congress, it is within our authority. Don't punt. Don't just hide behind somebody else. That is what this will do. If you believe that this is an emergency, vote that way, if that is what you really believe.

However, if you go to the grocery stores, if you see the price of beef, if you look at the price of coffee, if you feel that the economy is suffering as a result of these tariffs, if you think the economy for the average, everyday American is as good as those billionaire friends that the President has, then you vote with the President.

□ 1600

Give up, but don't give up your authority as a Member of this House to vote. The first fight here was the power to vote on this issue, which was blocked for 1 year. I choose not to give up that power. Whether I agree or disagree, I want to vote on it. That was prevented for over a year.

Today, we will vote on it. I thank some of my colleagues on the other side who have had the courage to stand up and say: Let's vote. Let's vote on this, and let the American people know how we stand. Let's vote on this to see if we believe that tariffs cause an affordability issue. Let's vote on this if we believe that Canada is not our friend, if Canada is an adversary, and you feel we should block a bridge like the President is talking about now, a bridge that Canadians paid for right across, block it, make them the 51st State, and insult them. If that is what you want to do, do it.

If you want to stand to bring down prices, if you want the average, everyday American to be able to raise their children and live the American Dream, if you want to make sure that families can afford to pay their rent, can afford to buy food, can afford to have healthcare, then you vote "yes" for this resolution.

The jury is really the American people. They ultimately will vote. They ultimately will tell us what is in their best interests. I have confidence in the American people. That is why I wanted a vote on this bill.

I didn't want to play the funny rules that were being played and were attempted last night. Fortunately, some of my colleagues on the other side did not want to play that game anymore either.

Those rules and those games that were played to prevent a vote on the floor in the United States Congress are over. That is what this is about, so the American people can see what we stand for. Do we stand for just going blindly with the President of the United States, or do we stand for the American people and making sure that their cost of living is cheaper and affordable so they can simply send their kids to school and be able to put a good meal on the table and a roof over the heads of their families? That is what this vote is about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I am the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. My colleague over here is the ranking member, the top Democrat. It is important that when we use our voice, when we speak, we speak accurately.

Number one, they refuse to speak about the fact that this bill is about ending an emergency relating to a fentanyl crisis. Number two, every single item that they like to talk about on tariffs and Canada are literally items that are exempt from tariffs in Canada.

It is very important, certainly as one of 435 in the House of Representatives, that you know what you are talking about. It is especially important as the number two person on the Foreign Affairs Committee that you know what you are talking about when you talk about tariffs.

There are not Canada beef tariffs, not Canada potash tariffs or dairy or food or grain or fertilizer. The list goes on and on. They mentioned coffee I don't know how many times.

The only things that there are tariffs on are things that are coming in from third-party countries into Canada and then coming into the United States of America. If it is grown in Canada, there is not a tariff on it. It is very important that my colleagues know that and recognize that and speak accurately in the positions that they are in.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back to what this is about.

My colleagues say there is no emergency. In fact, my colleague Mr. MEEKS said that if you think there is a crisis, if you think this is an emergency, then vote. Those were his words.

I think the only person on that side who might be able to change the mind of Democrats is my colleague, Mr. MEEKS, who is, again, unwilling to acknowledge that the death of 5,000 people in his State from fentanyl alone in 1 year is an emergency. He is unwilling to acknowledge it.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to take the remainder of my time here, about 1

minute, and give my colleague the opportunity one last time to correct the record for his New Yorkers.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. MEEKS. I will say that the American people are the judges. They don't need to hear anything else. The American people will judge.

Mr. MAST. Would my colleague like to say that 5,000 deaths aren't an emergency?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida controls the time.

Mr. MAST. Would my colleague like to say that 5,000 deaths are an emergency? Five thousand deaths in his State in 1 year from fentanyl—preventable. The President is doing everything he can to stop it with drug boats, with the Caribbean, with the northern border, with the southern border. Crickets. You could hear a pin drop in here. Not a word from them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to the order of the House of February 10, 2026, the previous question is ordered on the joint resolution.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the joint resolution.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on passage of the joint resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Ms. Randall Holstead, one of his secretaries.

UNDERSEA CABLE PROTECTION ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1057, I call up the bill (H.R. 261) to amend the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to prohibit requiring an 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 previously been authorized by a Federal or State agency, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BABIN). Pursuant to House Resolution

1057, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources, printed in the bill, is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 261

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Undersea Cable Protection Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR, UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHORIZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.

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

“SEC. 310A. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR, UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHORIZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the Secretary may not prohibit, or require any permit, including any special use 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 a license, lease, or permit has been issued by a Federal or State agency, and is in effect, authorizing such installation, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery.

“(b) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as altering existing requirements regarding interagency cooperation under section 304(d) in any Federal agency action described in that section and involving the installation, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary.”.

SEC. 3. REMOVING RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVITIES COVERED BY SANCTUARY SPECIAL USE PERMITS.

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

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

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

(3) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (2).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

□ 1610

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 261.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 261 sponsored by Congressman BUDDY CARTER of Georgia.

Undersea cables play a crucial role in the global economy. These cables are roughly 1 to 2 inches in diameter. Yet they crisscross the globe and carry approximately 95 percent of global internet traffic, facilitating trillions of dollars in global financial transactions.

The Undersea Cable Protection Act of 2025 eliminates the requirement for undersea cables to obtain a special use permit under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act as a condition to route these projects through a national marine sanctuary.

Undersea cables are and will continue to be subject to numerous environmental statutes including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Coastal Zone Management Act. These are just statutes in the Committee on Natural Resources' jurisdiction.

Many of these laws are implemented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA. We will hear from our friends on the other side of the aisle that this bill hinders NOAA's ability to conduct an environmental review of these projects. That is simply not true.

What is true, however, is that the specific use permit, which under current law only lasts 5 years, has caused national marine sanctuaries to effectively become no-go zones for undersea cables. This means reduced routes of diversity, consolidation of cable landing zones, and an increased threat to our national security.

Notably, this dynamic does not just cause stress on the physical infrastructure of these projects. Many of us are aware of the stories from around the world of undersea cables being severed with recent examples of this occurring in both Taiwan and the Baltic.

In the United States, as these cables have a limited number of landing areas, our adversaries would have the ability to cut off an increasing portion of communications, internet activity, and financial transactions by attacking just a few points.

Combine this looming threat with the increasing number of cables required in the coming years to keep pace with demand, and their growing role as critical infrastructure in our daily lives, and failure to support the continued development of these projects could pose a grave national security risk.

Removing the requirement for a special use permit advances the objectives of House Republicans and the administration to reduce regulatory burdens and encourage American competitiveness, an objective that President

Trump emphasized when he signed Executive Order 14267, Reducing Anti-competitive Regulatory Barriers.

Advancing this legislation will allow for the deployment of undersea cables while providing appropriate protection of our marine resources. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have figured out the rhythm, the prime directive here for Republican governance these days.

First, they slashed the services that working families actually depend on. Then they turn around and hand the savings over to their billionaire friends. They do it time and again. It is rinse, lather, repeat.

What do we have on the floor this week? We have all guessed it. It is another corporate handout, this time to the biggest technical oligarchs in the world. These folks have shown that if a person has enough money and if they are willing to bend the knee, they can pretty much get anything they want these days under MAGA Republican governance.

Every time we have tried to add protections and regulations to their platforms that would keep users and children safe, they stop it. Every time we try to do something about the disinformation they allow to run rampant in order to appease the White House and cater to extremists, they stop it.

Now they have schmoozed their way into getting Republicans to add another huge giveaway to this long, favored list of theirs. That means millions of dollars in savings so that they can run cables through our national marine sanctuaries for free.

I have to ask: What is the endgame here? Where does it stop? Are we systematically privatizing every piece of America's national heritage for the richest and most powerful corporations in the world? That is exactly where H.R. 261 seems to be taking us.

It rigs the game so that, for example, family fishing operations, dive boat captains, whale watching guides, and the other businesses that operate in marine sanctuaries have to navigate regulations. They have to play by the rules and pay fees but not the Big Tech oligarchs. These conglomerates, worth hundreds of billions of dollars, get special treatment and exemptions.

Our national marine sanctuaries encompass over half a million square miles of America's most precious underwater ecosystems. They are economic engines generating billions in tourism revenue, sustaining entire coastal economies. They are living laboratories also where families snorkel with sea turtles, divers explore historic shipwrecks, and scientists unlock climate secrets.

This legislation would let tech moguls bulldoze right through these

waters with industrial-scale operations—massive drill rigs, heavy machinery, and construction fleets—all without the environmental review that everyone else would have to undergo.

The sponsors insist that these undersea cables are just little needles in a haystack, and they will probably hold up a little segment of one of these cables to try to suggest these are just needles in a haystack. It is true that the fiber-optic lines themselves are thin, but the installation process is anything but delicate.

We are talking about seafloor excavation projects that can obliterate coral reefs and hurt marine mammals across vast swaths of the ocean. What could go wrong when these projects are happening on the seafloor?

We can look at what Meta tried to do off the Pacific Northwest coast. Their drilling operation collapsed, scattering pipes, toxic fluids, and heavy equipment across the seafloor like an underwater junkyard. Then the company just wrote a tiny check and left town. It was nowhere near the cost of the actual damage that was incurred, and the marine habitat there is still trashed.

My district is home to one of our Nation's iconic marine sanctuaries. I can say without hesitation that my constituents don't want to see these industrial activities rip through our sensitive kelp forests that support fisheries and tourism. No project in these places should happen without very careful study, without mitigation and, most importantly, without paying their fair share.

This bill would let tech executives treat these national treasures off our coasts like some kind of an industrial sacrifice zone without even paying a cent for the use of these resources.

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act is the only statute requiring compatibility with the conservation objectives of each sanctuary. If we strip that away, as this bill would do, we have created a regulatory sacrifice zone.

House Republicans can't even identify which licenses and permits would qualify in this bill in lieu of the special use permit process that would ordinarily apply.

Mr. Speaker, how can we look the American people in the eye and assure them that no environmental safeguards are going away when we don't even have that very basic information? For many in the majority, the truth is, the details just don't matter.

Meta and Amazon are what matter, and they want this legislation. The majority is willing to take it at face value and just pass this along, no questions asked. They will give the oligarchs what they want.

Democrats have proposed amendments to this legislation, commonsense protections. They have proposed a mandatory insurance coverage requirement, for example. They have also offered off-limits zones for very sensitive habitats and standard user fees like these oligarchs pay when they run one of these on land.

Our amendment would have allowed the basics of H.R. 261 to move forward, allowing an alternate process to the current special use permit, while preserving some of these basic operational guardrails to ensure the protection of these very special and fragile places.

□ 1620

The majority shot down every one of these proposals. This is not about efficiency. It is about preferential treatment for oligarchs like Meta and Amazon.

Consider this: When telecom companies want to access our national forests for one of these projects, they pay rent. When they cross national parks, they pay fees, but somehow marine sanctuaries are supposed to be free. That is nothing more than a corporate giveaway and a terrible precedent that won't stop with our marine sanctuaries.

The sponsors wrapped this handout in national security rhetoric. We have already heard some of it from the chairman. They claim that there is an urgent telecommunications crisis.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that these are multibillion-dollar projects spanning years and thousands of miles. They make their maps public. Everyone knows where these projects are taking place. The cost of environmental assessments is pocket change for these operations, but it could mean the difference between healthy habitats and destroyed resources in our national marine sanctuaries.

Here is what really stinks about this bill: While working American families are facing an affordability crisis, our Republican friends prioritize special favors like this for the wealthiest corporations on the planet. These are companies that could easily afford to just follow the rules and just pay a fair market rate for access to these places.

This sets a terrible precedent. We are witnessing the wholesale commercialization of America's natural inheritance, one sweetheart deal at a time. Today, it is cables and sanctuaries. Tomorrow, it will be mining in a national monument. Next week, it will be drilling in national seashores. Where does this corporate favoritism end?

If my colleagues want to modernize telecommunications, we can do that the right way. Let's invest in broadband infrastructure. Let's address transmission issues. We can incentivize clean, local, renewable energy. We can end President Trump's crazy war on clean energy.

Sure, maybe we can have a few fiber optic cables running through marine sanctuaries, but let's do it through proper analysis and siting. Let's be careful in these very special places. We don't need this bill to enable any of these shared objectives to move forward. Let us not create sacrifice zones in America's national marine sanctuaries.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this shameless corporate give-

away, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we understand exactly what is going on here. If you look at this map, this is an example along the California coast. These pink areas are national marine sanctuaries. You have this one zone down here by Morro Bay and Grover Beach, where cables can actually leave the shore. You can see the concentration of all of the existing cables in this area.

Mr. Speaker, it is possible to put a cable across a marine sanctuary right now. There was a law or a rule passed in 2002, I believe, that set up this special use permit. The problem is that it gave a 5-year special use permit, and these are 25-year-plus projects when you put one of these cables in.

Mr. Speaker, NOAA had the assignment to come up with what the lease cost would be to put these cables across a marine sanctuary. In all of NOAA's infinite wisdom, they came up with a price tag of \$40,000 to \$100,000 per mile, subject to inflation.

Nobody has gotten one of these permits. Nobody has put a cable across because this rule by the Federal Government has disincentivized all of these companies from being able to run cables. It seems that the purpose of the rule in the first place was just to keep cables out of the marine sanctuaries.

Mr. Speaker, if somebody were to put a cable through a marine sanctuary, they would still have to go through the NEPA process. They would have to go through the entire regulatory process to get a permit to put the cable across the sanctuary. It is not like you are throwing away all environmental oversight and all environmental guidelines to be able to bury one of these cables, or not bury but run it along the ocean floor.

Again, they are 1 inch to 2 inches in diameter. If you just looked at 1 mile at, say, 4 inches in diameter, that strip of land at a rate of \$40,000 per mile would be the equivalent of a yearly rent of about \$1 million per acre every year.

The whole rule and the law was stacked against doing anything, and that is exactly what has happened. We want to open this up where American companies can invest in American fiber cables so that we can communicate across the ocean and we can get away from all of this consolidation in one area where it is easy to target.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER), the lead sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 261, the Undersea Cable Protection Act of 2025.

Undersea fiber optic cables carry roughly 95 percent of all intercontinental internet traffic and nearly all transoceanic digital communications.

Trillions of dollars in financial transactions—trillions—global trade data, cloud computing, and secure government communications depend on these cables every single day. They are critical infrastructure, just as essential as ports, as pipelines, and our power grids.

Yet despite their importance, the United States has allowed overregulation and duplicative permitting to stand in the way of deploying and maintaining this infrastructure, especially on the West Coast, where permitting delays and overlapping approvals have made it effectively impossible to lay new cables in certain areas for decades. The chairman just described what we are talking about here.

These projects weren't stopped because they failed environmental review. They were stopped because of bureaucracy. That is the problem that H.R. 261 is designed to fix. Today, even when an undersea cable project has already received full authorization from a Federal or State agency, it can still be forced through an additional duplicate permitting process with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

That extra layer adds years of delay, drives up costs, and discourages investment without providing meaningful environmental protection. H.R. 261 clarifies that once a project has been lawfully approved at the State and Federal levels, it should not be required to obtain an additional permit for the same activity.

Let me be clear. This bill does not weaken environmental protections. All existing environmental laws, reviews, and interagency coordination requirements remain fully intact. This is about eliminating redundancy, not eliminating oversight.

This matters for States like Georgia. Georgia's economy depends on global connectivity from the Port of Savannah and our logistics and supply chain networks, to manufacturing defense contractors, data centers, and a growing technology sector. Reliable undersea cable infrastructure supports jobs. It supports trade and economic growth across the country.

There is also a serious national security component to this. Undersea cables carry sensitive government and military communications. Delays in installing, repairing, or maintaining this infrastructure create real vulnerability to our national security. Even today, our adversaries, like China, are actively targeting global communication networks, especially cutting undersea cables that connect us to our allies, like Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

Secure, resilient connectivity is not optional. It is a strategic necessity. H.R. 261 is a solution that offers a balanced, commonsense solution. It cuts unnecessary red tape. It preserves environmental safeguards. It strengthens our economy. Most importantly, it protects America's national security.

I implore this Congress to pass this legislation to secure America's technological dominance and fortify our national security.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 261.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is a little bit rich to suggest that if this became law, we would lose no environmental protections. This bill eliminates the special use permit, under which the folks who protect our national marine sanctuaries make sure that there is proper siting, proper environmental review, proper mitigation, and proper accountability for when things go wrong, and things do go wrong.

The one example I can hold out is in Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary because that is something that went through the special use permit process. It was for one of these undersea cable landings. Things got very complicated.

Thankfully, the National Park Service was able to charge market rent for the rights to go through this area, and it turns out that that was a good thing because there were all sorts of complications. In fact, there are still all types of ongoing repair and monitoring areas where things weren't installed properly and where there was all sorts of damage that wasn't foreseen on the front end.

□ 1630

Having that fair market value paid in the first place and then retained by the Federal agency that may need to follow up and make sure that these special places are protected is very important.

Mr. WESTERMAN has suggested that the existing special use permit sets a fair market value that is just so prohibitive that none of these landings will ever happen in marine sanctuaries. The estimates from lobbyists are that without this bill, two 20-mile segments through a California sanctuary would cost these huge tech companies between \$2.8 million and \$7 million per year.

To put that in perspective, in the time that we have been arguing, these companies have made more than that. This is pocket change to these companies. They can afford to pay fair market value in order to go through our national marine sanctuaries.

As Mr. WESTERMAN I am sure would not disagree, if they were proposing to run these things through a national park in Hot Springs, Arkansas, for example, it is a good thing they would have to get a special permit to do that, that they would have to pay fair market value, and that the funds they pay would be available to that unit of the National Park System to make sure things were done right and to make sure that there was accountability and mitigation going forward. We are just asking for the same thing for our national marine sanctuaries.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. MILLER).

Mr. MILLER of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 261, the Undersea Cable Protection Act.

Undersea cables are the backbone of our modern economy. These cables are no bigger than a garden hose but support over \$10 trillion in international commerce on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, you would think that this clear significance would prompt us to make sure that it is easy to build these things, but no. The United States is one of the most difficult countries in the world to lay and operate undersea cables. This is a national security liability.

There is simply no reason to require a special use permit for an undersea cable because there is absolutely zero—and I say "zero"—environmental impact.

It is time for Congress to pay more attention to the critical infrastructure that surrounds us in this country. That is why I introduced the NEPTUNE Act, to make sure that the Navy maintains its undersea cable laying and repair capabilities. That is why I intend to vote for this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend BUDDY CARTER from the Committee on Natural Resources for leading this effort.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CARBAJAL), who is from the Central Coast.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chair for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in firm opposition to H.R. 261, the Undersea Cable Protection Act of 2025.

On its face, this legislation may seem like a narrow procedural change of streamlining permitting for undersea fiber-optic cables. In reality, it strips away critical environmental and economic safeguards that we and the communities we represent depend on to help power our Nation's blue economy.

We know that four of the five national marine sanctuaries in California generate more than \$114 million a year and support over 1,800 jobs in commercial fishing alone.

H.R. 261 is a giveaway to megacorporations at the expense of the American taxpayer, the oceans, and the Great Lakes we have advocated to protect.

Some of the marine sanctuaries most at risk because of this legislation are iconic spots off the coast of California: Monterey Bay, Channel Islands, and the newly created Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, a sanctuary that was decades in the making. First nominated by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in 2015, the sanctuary became effective on November 30, 2024, after review by Congress and the State of California.

Through this legislation, my constituents and the Chumash Heritage

National Marine Sanctuary will lose big. Waiving the future fees on cables from industry would cost between \$2.7 million and \$7 million per every 20 miles each year. While there is a 2-year exception for the newly designated Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, current law requires operators and installers of deep-sea fiberoptic cables to obtain a permit from NOAA and pay fair market fees for use of these areas.

I and many others here today believe we need secure and reliable telecommunications infrastructure. I understand that the 5-year time limits on permits cause concern for companies looking for long-term certainty. However, I firmly believe that we can find a solution that protects these sanctuary resources and treats all stakeholders fairly.

We can find a win-win solution that supports innovation, continues to support our local economies, and ensures that the American taxpayer gets a fair return for use of our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, that is why, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to committee. If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill.

My amendment is straightforward: Allow tech companies to have their alternative permitting pathway in sanctuaries but add in a few commonsense guardrails.

First, allow an alternative license or permit, but require that the project be compatible with the purpose of the sanctuary. That means protecting the sensitive areas of the seafloor and avoiding cultural and historic sites.

Second, require public comment as is currently the practice with special use permits.

Third, require these companies to carry liability insurance for the project. We don't want to see another disaster like we saw off the coast of Oregon, a Meta subsidiary dumping drilling fluid and drilling equipment on the seafloor, then leaving the taxpayers on the hook to clean up the mess. Yes, did I say taxpayers? Yes, they are the ones who paid.

Finally, my amendment would maintain the status quo and allow NOAA to collect a fair market fee for the use of these sanctuary resources, just like any other public land management agency does for cables that cross their protected lands.

These are all standard provisions for the use of public resources, and I hope we can bring back a little bit of common sense to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment into the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in voting for

the motion to recommit to protect our marine sanctuaries for future generations.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the article featured behind me found that adversaries like Russia and China are taking disruptive action against undersea cables on a more frequent basis around the world. Here is an article just from yesterday talking about a Chinese cargo ship captain who has been charged with severing a natural gas pipeline and a communication cable in the Baltic Sea.

If we stick to the status quo, we are leaving ourselves more vulnerable to similar threats at our doorstep. Our adversaries are taking an increasingly aggressive posture in targeting critical infrastructure.

Congressman CARTER's legislation promotes route diversity, reduces threats to global communication systems, and ensures that the United States wins this global technology race. That is why it is important that we pass this legislation and that we give companies the certainty that they can build these communication lines and diversify where they are locating them so that we can protect our economic security and also our national security.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very selective concern about national security, apparently, because right now, every one of these landings has a publicly available map. The whole world knows where everything is. If my friends were concerned about the national security exposure that that presents, you would think we would be working on some way to make that less of a publicly obvious piece of information. No, we are not hearing about that. We are hearing it raised as a bit of a pretext here to try to run these projects through national marine sanctuaries rent-free and environmental review-free. One of the speakers across the aisle actually said a few moments ago that there is no need for a special use permit, that it is ridiculous to require one because there is no environmental impact to these projects.

We have heard about what happened off the Oregon coast. Certainly, the people of the Oregon coast would differ mightily with the notion that there is no environmental impact. They are still cleaning up the mess, and taxpayers ultimately had to do it.

We also have the example from the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary that I referred to earlier. This, of course, is a tough place to work on the seafloor. It is mud. It is sensitive habitat. Fishermen are active in the area. There are national security assets there. There is the Northwest Training and Testing Range, so it is a complicated place to do a project like this.

It is a good thing that NOAA was able to charge market fees when they approved a special use permit that took into account all of these complexities, because those fees ended up being very necessary.

□ 1640

This project had huge issues over the last 25 years. The sea plow that was used to trench across the sanctuary left a 3-meter wide gash across the sea floor that is still recovering. Tell me about no environmental impacts.

The installation company never did post-project monitoring. They left the project without checking that the cables were even buried to the correct depths. NOAA had to come back in with submersible equipment to monitor the cables. It is a good thing they had the resources to do that from those market fees because they found numerous locations where the cable was exposed, floating above the sea floor, putting the fiberoptic infrastructure itself at risk—if we care about national security and telecommunications integrity—and posing a danger to other sanctuary users and their gear. A fishing boat, for example, could have easily gotten snagged on some of these exposed, loose cables, taking down the entire network, destroying equipment, that a small business fishermen had invested in.

To this day the fiberoptic company has to enter that sanctuary regularly in order to repair and rebury the cables that were improperly installed. All of this would have been an even greater mess had this bill been law at the time, had NOAA been unable to put some conditions and some guardrails into the special use permit, had NOAA been unable to charge that fair market fee that has enabled it to follow up and clean up some of this mess.

That is what at risk if we pass a thoughtless corporate giveaway like this.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

This legislation before us today accomplishes two objectives:

First, it eliminates the requirement for undersea cables to obtain a special use permit for operating within national marine sanctuaries. Again, undersea cable projects would still need to undergo review under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Coastal Zone Management Act. None of that permitting is waived in this bill, and I would dare say anybody wanting to run one of these cables would say they are getting to do it and to avoid all environmental laws and protections. I don't think people running these cables want to do that.

Second, it removes the 5-year timeline for any special use permit

within any national marine sanctuary. Together, these reforms reduce regulatory burdens. They protect our national security, and they ensure that America can lead the way in deploying undersea cables while protecting our marine environments.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressman CARTER for his leadership on this issue. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1057, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Carbajal of California moves to recommit the bill H.R. 261 to the Committee on Natural Resources.

The material previously referred to by Mr. CARBAJAL is as follows:

Mr. Carbajal moves to recommit the bill H.R. 261 to the Committee on Natural Resources with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Page 4, line 7, strike the closing quotation mark and the final period.

Page 4, after line 7, insert the following:

“(C) PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall provide appropriate public notice for any license, lease, or permit issued by a Federal or State agency as described in subsection (a).

“(d) APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) shall only apply with respect to a license, lease, or permit issued by a Federal or State agency as described in that subsection if—

“(1) such license, lease, or permit requires that any activity conducted under such license, lease, or permit is—

“(A) compatible with the terms of designation of the applicable national marine sanctuary; and

“(B) conducted in a manner that does not destroy, cause the loss of, or injure any sanctuary resource; and

“(2) the issuing Federal or State agency requires the applicant for such license, lease, or permit, to be eligible to be issued such license, lease, or permit—

“(A) to carry general liability insurance; or

“(B)(i) post an equivalent bond against any claim arising out of an activity conducted under such license, lease, or permit; and

“(ii) agree to hold the United States harmless against such a claim.

“(e) FEES.—The Secretary may assess and collect fees for the conduct of any activity in a national marine sanctuary under a license, lease, or permit issued by a Federal or State agency as described in subsection (a) in accordance with the terms described in subsection 310(d).

“(f) STATE AGENCY DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘State agency’ means an agency of a State such that all or part of the national marine sanctuary is within the territorial limits of such State or is superjacent

to the subsoil and seabed within the seaward boundary of such State, as that boundary is established under the Submerged Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.).”.

Strike section 3.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XIX, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

ADJUSTING IMPORTS OF PROCESSED CRITICAL MINERALS AND THEIR DERIVATIVE PRODUCTS INTO THE UNITED STATES—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 119-134)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with applicable law, including section 232(c)(2) of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1862(c)(2)) (section 232), I am providing notice of the reasons why I have decided to take action to adjust imports of processed critical minerals and their derivative products (PCMDPs) so that such imports will not threaten to impair the national security of the United States.

On October 24, 2025, the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), in accordance with section 232, transmitted to me a report on his investigation into the effects of imports of PCMDPs on the national security of the United States. Based on the facts considered in that investigation, the Secretary found and advised me of his opinion that PCMDPs are being imported into the United States in such quantities and under such circumstances as to threaten to impair the national security of the United States.

In Proclamation 11001 of January 14, 2026 (Adjusting Imports of Processed Critical Minerals and Their Derivative Products Into The United States) (Proclamation), after considering the Secretary's report, the factors in section 232(d) (19 U.S.C. 1862(d)), and other relevant factors and information, I concurred with the Secretary's finding that PCMDPs are being imported into the United States in quantities and under circumstances that threaten to impair the national security of the United States. In my judgment, and in light of the Secretary's report, the fac-

tors in section 232(d), and other relevant factors and information, I determined that it is necessary and appropriate to direct negotiations of agreements to address the national security threat. In the Proclamation, I also noted that depending on the status or outcome of those negotiations, I may take other measures to adjust the imports of PCMDPs to address the national security threat.

I am enclosing a copy of the Proclamation that I have issued. The Proclamation further explains the circumstances underlying the threat to impair the national security of the United States posed by imports of PCMDPs, and the actions taken in the Proclamation to eliminate that threat.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 11, 2026.

ADJUSTING IMPORTS OF MEDIUM- AND HEAVY-DUTY VEHICLES, MEDIUM- AND HEAVY-DUTY VEHICLE PARTS, AND BUSES INTO THE UNITED STATES—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 119-135)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with applicable law, including section 232(c)(2) of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1862(c)(2)) (section 232), I am providing notice of the reasons why I have decided to take action to adjust imports of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (MHDVs), and medium- and heavy-duty vehicle parts (MHDVPs), and buses so that such imports will not threaten to impair the national security of the United States.

In September 2025, the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), in accordance with section 232, transmitted to me a report on his investigation into the effects of imports of MHDVs, MHDVPs, and buses on the national security of the United States. Based on the facts considered in that investigation, the Secretary found and advised me of his opinion that MHDVs, MHDVPs, and buses are being imported into the United States in such quantities and under such circumstances as to threaten to impair the national security of the United States.

In Proclamation 10984 of October 17, 2025 (Adjusting Imports of Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles, Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicle Parts, and Buses Into the United States) (Proclamation), after considering the Secretary's report, the factors in section 232(d) (19 U.S.C. 1862(d)), and other relevant factors and information, I concurred with the Secretary's finding that MHDVs, MHDVPs, and buses are being imported