Social Security should not bear the price for that Do Not Pay system's use of the data. I certainly support that provision, but every American will bear the cost of Republicans' failure to protect their hard-earned benefits and private information from Trump's hatchet job on the Social Security Administration.

While I don't oppose the bill, I do oppose the misrepresentations that are made about it.

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

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill is another piece of the puzzle in the fight against waste, fraud, and abuse. Before the Social Security Administration began sharing its complete death records with the Treasury Department, the Federal Government paid $1.3 billion to the dead in just a single year.

Congress authorized the Treasury to access Social Security's death data for 3 years ending in 2026. In the first year alone, Treasury reported that it helped the Federal Government identify, prevent, or recover $108 million in improper payments, with another $200 million expected by the end of this year. It is only common sense to make this fraud prevention measure permanent.

This policy has already passed both the Senate and the Ways and Means Committee with broad, bipartisan support. I hope the House does the same and sends this to President Trump's desk as soon as possible.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 269.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AGOA EXTENSION ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6500) to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6500

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 "AGOA Extension Act".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR CERTAIN COUNTRIES IN AFRICA UNDER AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT; RETROACTIVE APPLICATION.

(a) EXTENSION.—

(1) TRADE ACT OF 1974.—Section 506B of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2466b) is amended by striking "September 30, 2025" and inserting "December 31, 2028".

(2) AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 112(g) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (19 U.S.C. 3721(g)) is amended by striking "September 30, 2025" and inserting "December 31, 2028".

(B) REGIONAL APPAREL ARTICLE PROGRAM.—Section 112(b)(3)(A) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (19 U.S.C. 3721(b)(3)(A)) is amended—

(i) in clause (i), by striking "21 succeeding" and inserting "24 succeeding"; and

(ii) in clause (ii)(II), by striking "September 30, 2025" and inserting "December 31, 2028".

(C) THIRD-COUNTRY FABRIC PROGRAM.—Section 112(c)(1) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (19 U.S.C. 3721(c)(1)) is amended—

(i) in the paragraph heading, by striking "SEPTEMBER 30, 2025" and inserting "DECEMBER 31, 2028";

(ii) in subparagraph (A), by striking "September 30, 2025" and inserting "December 31, 2028"; and

(iii) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking "September 30, 2025" and inserting "December 31, 2028".

(b) RETROACTIVE APPLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 514 of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1514) or any other provision of law, and subject to paragraph (2), any entry of a covered article to which duty-free treatment or other preferential treatment under section 506A of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2466a) would have applied if the entry had been made on September 30, 2025, that was made—

(A) after September 30, 2025, and

(B) before the date of the enactment of this Act,

shall be liquidated or reliquidated as though such entry occurred on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) REQUESTS.—A liquidation or reliquidation may be made under paragraph (1) with respect to an entry only if a request therefor is filed with the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act that contains sufficient information to enable such Commissioner—

(A) to locate the entry; or

(B) to reconstruct the entry if it cannot be located.

(3) PAYMENT OF AMOUNTS OWED.—Any amounts owed by the United States pursuant to the liquidation or reliquidation of an entry of a covered article under paragraph (1) shall be paid, without interest of any kind, not later than 90 days after the date of the liquidation or reliquidation (as the case may be).

(4) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) COVERED ARTICLE.—The term "covered article" means an article from a country that is designated by the President as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country under section 104 of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (19 U.S.C. 3703) as of the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) ENTRY.—The term "entry" includes a withdrawal from warehouse for consumption.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CUSTOMS USER FEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 13031(j)(3) of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (19 U.S.C. 58c(j)(3)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking "September 30, 2031" and inserting "December 31, 2031"; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)(i), by striking "September 30, 2031" and inserting "December 31, 2031".

(b) RATE FOR MERCHANDISE PROCESSING FEES.—Section 503 of the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3805 note) is amended by striking "September 30, 2031" and inserting "December 31, 2031".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6500, the AGOA Extension Act, legislation to reauthorize the African Growth and Opportunity Act trade preference program.

Our Nation's economic, strategic, and national security interests are front and center in AGOA. Think about it: This program strengthens our critical supply chains and helps us counter the harmful global influence of nations like China and Russia.

Don't just take my word for it. A witness testifying before the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee put it bluntly when discussing the potential for a lapse in AGOA when he said: "There will be a party in Moscow. There will be a party in Beijing if we don't reauthorize it."

To achieve this, however, we aren't going to lower our standards. This extension maintains the most stringent eligibility criteria of any trade preference program, with annual reviews to defend IP rights, human rights, market access, and the rule of law against corruption. To be eligible, countries must also ensure they are not undermining America's national security or foreign policy interests.

While we still need a longer-term AGOA extension, this reauthorization provides a much-needed level of certainty and stability in the near term so that Congress can continue its work on future reforms to address and strengthen U.S. priorities. After all, U.S. businesses have invested $8 billion annually under AGOA while our African trading partners have begun to open their markets for U.S. agriculture.

Protecting market access for America's farmers and ranchers is incredibly important to the rural communities I represent in Missouri, a point I have made in my travels to the regions going back to 2015 when I attended the AGOA forum in Gabon.

After we take this step, we can build further. Americans would benefit if African nations graduated into formal bilateral trade agreements with the U.S.

Right now, the nation of Mauritius is on track to graduate from AGOA within the next 5 years. When African nations take steps to expand their markets to American products, graduating from AGOA should have clear benefits, not negative consequences.

Africa is home to 30 percent of the world's critical mineral reserves, and China is quickly moving to corner the market on critical minerals and exploit Africa's vast resources. Stronger partnerships with African nations mean we will limit China's ability to make further gains in the region and protect our national security interests.

□ 1710

Madam Speaker, for example, last year the Trump administration announced a strategic partnership agreement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop critical minerals.

I thank the chairman of our Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, Congressman ADRIAN SMITH, for his tremendous work and leadership in proactively building support for this renewal effort.

I urge my colleagues to support this extension of AGOA, which received strong bipartisan approval in the Ways and Means Committee. I look forward to continuing to work across the aisle to further strengthen this critical program.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 6500, the AGOA Extension Act.

For over two decades, AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, has affirmed America's commitment to expanding economic opportunity, creating jobs, strengthening strategic partnerships, and forging mutually beneficial economic bonds between the United States and our allies in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since its enactment in 2000, AGOA has provided duty-free access to the U.S. market for a broad range of goods from eligible AGOA sub-Saharan African countries. AGOA has enjoyed broad bicameral and bipartisan support from both Democrats and Republicans from both the House and the Senate.

By lowering barriers for African exports, AGOA expands demand for U.S. services and inputs—from agricultural equipment to digital and logistic services to energy and finance—supporting jobs at home and abroad.

In an era of global economic disruption, AGOA helps U.S. companies diversify supply sources and build resilient and market-oriented networks in key sectors, including textiles, agriculture, and renewable energy.

By providing preferential treatment for developing African countries, AGOA promotes U.S. strategic influence and democratic values, as well as economic prosperity. Eligibility under AGOA is directly tied to the progress by these developing African countries on market reform, rule of law, labor standards, and human rights.

The conditionality of this trade preference program harnesses trade as a catalyst for reform, not just revenue. Unfortunately, the AGOA program expired in September 2025, creating uncertainty for the future of America's relationship with the region.

The bill we are considering today will extend AGOA for 3 years and will send a clear message to the African Continent that we are committed to strengthening our shared prosperity.

Over the last few years, I have met directly with AGOA country leaders, civil society groups, and business communities about the importance of maintaining and improving the AGOA program.

I also had an opportunity to travel to Africa with Chairman SMITH. To a person, they all said the same thing. While they wanted a 10-year reauthorization, and it was preferable, to a person they all said that we needed certainty in this program.

The fact that the program ended in September 2025 has been a serious source of concern for many. A clean, 3-year reauthorization is preferable to allowing AGOA to lapse because businesses require predictability and certainty.

Investment decisions cannot wait for prolonged negotiations or uncertainty. A lapse has caused immediate harm to African exporters and U.S. importers, disrupting supply chains and costing jobs on both sides.

Reauthorization preserves U.S. credibility. Letting AGOA expire signals disengagement at a time when competitors like Russia and China are deepening their presence across the continent.

Reforms can and should be considered, but holding the program hostage for a perfect bill is too high of a price to pay. The cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of moving forward today.

Africa provides an important growth opportunity for U.S. markets. Economic growth is rapidly accelerating on the African Continent. By 2050, one in four people in the world will be African. As women become more integrated into the formal economy and the young workforce is empowered by emerging technologies, the region is poised to be the next rising economic powerhouse in the 21st century.

Therefore, it is in America's national interest to strengthen our ties with the region and encourage this growth by deepening our trade relations. If we don't nurture this important relationship, China and others will. We can ill afford to allow others to fill the void.

AGOA is more than just about tariffs and duty-free access to markets. Passing this bill will demonstrate that Congress is committed to our long-term relationship with Africa. Most importantly, reauthorizing AGOA sends a very strong message that, even though the President's rhetoric toward many African countries has been a distraction, we in Congress do acknowledge the very important role that the continent of Africa plays.

To be clear, AGOA is not just a priority for the Congressional Black Caucus, although it is. It has been a decades-long bipartisan priority, and it stands as a proud example of America's commitment to deepening trust, stability, and shared prosperity with our AGOA allies.

I strongly support the 3-year reauthorization of the program. Moreover, during this extension, I hope we can continue our bipartisan efforts to modernize the program. I believe that we are making real progress on provisions that would strengthen enforcement, that would improve congressional oversight, strengthen critical mineral supply chains, improve utilization, and establish a smooth graduation path that encourages economic development.

Again, I thank Chairman JASON SMITH, as well as Ranking Member NEAL, for making AGOA a bipartisan priority for this committee. I also thank Ways and Means Chief Trade Counsel Alexandra Whittaker for her tireless efforts on this issue.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to vote for this bill and to send a strong signal to our African allies that leaders in Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, respect and value our continued partnership.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the diligent work of the full committee chairman, Chairman SMITH, to prioritize this issue.

Madam Speaker, we have an opportunity to advance the bipartisan legacy of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a program which has been a pillar of U.S. trade and economic engagement throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

As we all know, trade requires consistent engagement. With over 17,000 tariff lines and complex supply chains, trade is a detailed and dynamic system which values certainty.

AGOA is a unique opportunity to strengthen trading relationships through market signals and cooperation on our partners' trade and investment policy, rule of law, as well as worker and human rights. We cannot sit on the sidelines while our global adversaries, including the Chinese Communist Party, spread their malign influence across the continent.

As the Trump administration engages on trade, AGOA can be a complementary trade policy as we look to build mutually beneficial reciprocal trade. Though preference programs can be the foundation of our engagement with developing countries, they should never be the extent of it.

Take Kenya, for example. It has been a beneficiary of the program since it began. When AGOA first went into effect in 2000, Kenya had very limited trade with the United States. Under AGOA, Kenya's GDP has grown exponentially, as have their imports from the U.S. As their economy has succeeded, so has their capacity for trade.

This was why I was so eager to see the first Trump administration work to advance bilateral negotiations with Kenya, and I hope to see continued progress with Kenya and other potential partners.

As the world works to avoid overreliance on unreliable single sources, redundant supply chains for both inputs and markets for our outbound products are key. Stronger partnerships across Africa can be a solution for many of these items, from critical minerals to agriculture.

With the fastest growing population and untapped economic potential, we must maintain reliable and proactive engagement across the continent.

Madam Speaker, again, I welcome all my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan program.

□ 1720

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Madam Speaker, I support strengthening our relations with African countries through the African Growth and Opportunity Extension Act. I think increased trade, economic activity, and development that respects human rights, labor rights, and the environment can benefit both Americans and Africans.

I think that trade is especially important at this time after the profound damage done by the consistent disrespect by President Trump of Africans, unless they happen to be White Afrikaners, and, more importantly, by his abrupt and unjustified termination of the Agency for International Development, which has cost tens of thousands of lives in Africa and other places, and thousands of American jobs. AGOA cannot undo all of that harm, but it can be part of responsible engagement, if it is done right.

It is important, however, to understand that this reauthorization does not guarantee a single African country the benefits of this bill if they fall out of favor with President Trump. The role of Congress is constrained. The bill continues to empower the President to include or exclude countries entirely at his whim, and we know how unpredictable, vengeful, and punitive he can be.

While I support AGOA, I do not support extending it to countries with serious human rights abuses, nor to those engaging in serious environmental destruction, such as the devastation of Africa's rainforests.

In Tanzania, bodies filled morgues as more than 700 people last fall were reportedly killed in connection with the recent election. Peaceful protesters in Mozambique, Angola, and Madagascar were shot by security forces. Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are involved in multiple war crimes, despite President Trump's failed attempts to achieve a peace agreement.

I have particular concern about Kenya from a business standpoint. A longtime, well-respected Austin resident, an engineer and law-abiding citizen, serves as co-president of LightPulse, a respected Kenyan healthcare and educational institution. Kenyan authorities cooperated in the abduction of one of his employees, who was taken to Türkiye and tortured. The next thing that we knew, up on a website in Türkiye was a declaration that my constituent was being labeled as a terrorist. Another incident of this type occurred only last month, and the Kenyans have been unable to provide a suitable explanation for their conduct.

Finally, American workers should not be forced to compete on an uneven playing field, where China sends manufactured products to Africa, there are minor changes made there, and then this product is sent here as an AGOA trade preference product. Our trade laws should be clear and not put our workers at a disadvantage by forcing them to compete with these kinds of practices.

AGOA cannot undo the immense harm that President Trump has already inflicted, but if properly structured, it can strengthen democratic rights and environmental protection.

I would support a short-term extension paired with meaningful reforms. We have had no shortage of time in order to get these reforms; only a lack of will. We do not have that reform bill before us.

Madam Speaker, for all of those reasons, I respectfully urge my colleagues to reject this bill and instead work toward a more responsible, accountable reauthorization of AGOA.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, we have no additional speakers and are prepared to close.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Alabama for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote in support of renewing the African Growth and Opportunity Extension Act.

AGOA is a critical program to advance prosperity for the people of sub-Saharan Africa and to maintain United States' leadership in the region. It is a program that has bipartisan support.

AGOA is far from perfect, and so I understand concerns raised by a wide range of stakeholders, including labor, environmental, and other trade groups, about proposed changes to make this program better, stronger, and more effective moving forward.

This is a straight reauthorization for 3 years, providing a runway for all stakeholders to weigh in on needed improvements. To appropriate the sage words of Frederick Douglass: ''Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.''

The U.S. must not cede power to China or any other world power by not curing the lapse of this vital, soft power tool.

Madam Speaker, I urge support of the bill.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT).

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their work on this bill.

Madam Speaker, at this time, I really don't have much to say except that I am fully in support of this legislation. I am so thankful to my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee for working through this and, of course, the tremendous work of the staff.

We know that, since enactment in 2000 of AGOA, it has been a key element in providing support in sub-Saharan Africa for duty-free access to U.S. markets for almost 6,000 products, which includes over 5,000 products under the Generalized System of Preferences, as well as 1,800 specific AGOA products.

We know that Africa has the youngest and fastest-growing youth population, 60 percent under 25. Madam Speaker, 5 million young people will enter the workforce from Africa in 2035.

We cannot concede, as a nation, this tremendous market that is available not only for American economic growth and innovation but African, as well. Russia and China have engaged in an extraction of resources on the continent through their Belt and Road Initiative, through the use of Wagner, as well as China extracting so many minerals from this continent.

American innovation, economic support, and products are the products that Africa wants to utilize. Unless we have AGOA, they cannot do so.

I thank the gentlewoman for allowing me to speak on this tremendous opportunity.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS), the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. MEEKS. Madam Speaker, as a longtime proponent of the African Growth and Opportunity Extension Act, I rise today in support of this bipartisan bill, H.R. 6500, the AGOA Extension Act.

Let me first thank Ways and Means Committee Chairman SMITH, Chairman SMITH of the Trade Subcommittee, Ranking Member NEAL, and Ranking Member LINDA SÁNCHEZ for working on this in a bipartisan way and getting it over the hurdle.

Madam Speaker, I also have to think about an individual who mentored me. I cannot think about AGOA without thinking about the former chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, the

Honorable late Charles B. Rangel. He always spoke and thought of doing what he could for the continent of Africa.

The African Growth and Opportunity Extension Act delivers significant economic benefit to the United States. In removing barriers to trade between the United States and Africa, AGOA has enabled approximately $1.8 billion in salaries for American workers each year.

AGOA also provides approximately $1 billion in annual benefits to American consumers. The program has resulted in millions of American households enjoying lower prices for cocoa, coffee, and other goods that the United States cannot produce at home.

American businesses understand the value of supporting robust U.S.-Africa trade, which supports more than 450,000 jobs across the United States.

For this reason, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Apparel & Footwear Association, and countless other business associations are calling for AGOA's reauthorization by Congress.

Put simply, this bill offers clear advantages for millions of American workers. AGOA is essential to also protecting U.S. foreign policy interests in Africa.

As we speak, China and other U.S. adversaries are trying to undermine the African Continent to do this kind of work. In fact, Chinese officials seek to deepen China's commercial ties with African countries, prevent American businesses from competing in local markets, and redirect trade away from the United States.

□ 1730

Africa is the continent with the world's fastest growing population. China recognizes the critical role that Africa will play in the future and its economy and wants to exploit that, particularly as global demand for critical minerals and rare earth elements increases. China understands its own economy will benefit by making trade with Africa easier, not harder, and that is why China is rooting for AGOA's demise while offering zero-trade deals that mimic this vital U.S. program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. MEEKS. Madam Speaker, there are certainly improvements we can make in terms of encouraging countries to better utilize the trade preferences offered under AGOA and to maximize their government strategies to take full advantage of those benefits. I look forward to working with my colleagues to improve AGOA over the next 3 years, but extending the legislation is a first critical step.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote for this program.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

May I inquire as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Alabama has 4 minutes remaining.

Ms. SEWELL. Madam Speaker, in closing, I again thank Chairman SMITH and Ranking Member NEAL, as well as Chairman SMITH and Ranking Member SÁNCHEZ of the Subcommittee on Trade for working so hard to make sure that we reauthorize AGOA.

Last year alone, AGOA imports totaled $8 billion. Moreover, since 2002, AGOA has spurred more than $500 billion in exports to the United States.

However, this year, the impact of the reciprocal tariffs, coupled with the expiration of AGOA on September 30, threaten to erode 25 years of economic cooperation.

If we fail to act, we will likely see weakening supply chains and increased poverty across the continent. Moreover, many industries could shift investments away from Africa and toward Asia. Sub-Saharan African exports to China have overtaken exports to the United States. We should not allow this trend to continue.

AGOA remains a centerpiece of United States trade in that region, and turning our backs on Africa at this critical time would be disastrous. Africa is diversifying their economy. It is expanding past textiles and agriculture. The service sector is growing rapidly, and women are beginning to get opportunities to enter the formal workforce.

During my visits to several African countries over the years, and most recently with Chairman SMITH, I witnessed personally the benefit of AGOA, and I witnessed the entrepreneurial spirit of the people. As internet access becomes broadly available, rapid economic growth and opportunity will follow.

We have the ability to benefit from this inevitable growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, and we should do something about it.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to be a part of this committee and a part of this bipartisan effort to make sure we do just that.

In closing, I quote the first African-American chair of the Committee on Ways and Means, Charlie Rangel, and what he said about AGOA. He is often known as the father of AGOA. Charlie said: ''Since it was enacted in 2000, AGOA has been the cornerstone of the U.S. trade policy with Sub-Saharan Africa and has been a true success.''

AGOA has further contributed to diversification and competitiveness of Sub-Saharan Africa's economies and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the continent and the United States. I can think of no better way for America to continue to expand its trade relationships with Africa than reauthorizing this very important piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I again ask my colleagues to vote in favor of this reauthorization and extend a warm and hearty thank you to Chairman SMITH for making sure that this remains a bipartisan effort and we are getting it across the finish line.

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

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, first, I say thank you to Ms. SEWELL, and Mr. NEAL for their help in order to get this across the finish line. This is an important piece of legislation that I know my staff, Josh Snead and Hilary Pinegar, have worked tirelessly on for a long time to make sure that this program does not die. I thank both the Democrat and Republican staff. I thank Jorge Rueda and Alexandra Whittaker, as well. I appreciate the hard work. This is super important.

Reauthorization of the African Growth and Opportunity Act will advance the economic, strategic, and national security interests of the United States today and pave the way for future reforms to strengthen this critical program.

AGOA has a proven track record of holding our trading partners accountable to the strictest standards, while opening markets to American producers, particularly our farming community.

It is a vital tool to combat the harmful influence of nations like China and protect America's supply chains, including access to critical minerals.

Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD an article discussing the strategic importance of critical minerals.

[Sept. 3, 2025]

WHY IS RENEWING AGOA STRATEGIC FOR U.S.-AFRICA MINERALS DIPLOMACY?

(Critical Questions by Gracelin Baskaran)

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), first signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 2000, is a unilateral U.S. trade preference program set to expire in September 2025. Its pending reauthorization has sparked debate over whether—and how—it should be extended and reformed. A failure to extend AGOA could have larger ramifications at a time when the United States is doubling down on its commercial diplomacy—and more specifically, its mineral diplomacy efforts—with Africa.

Q1: What is the strategic role of AGOA nations in reshaping critical mineral supply chains?

A1: There are 33 African countries eligible to participate in AGOA. Many of these countries—such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia—are among the world's most well endowed with critical minerals.

In fact, five of the world's top fifteen destinations for rare earths exploration in the past year were AGOA beneficiaries: South Africa, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Angola. Together, they have roughly 50 high-grade rare earths deposits. Moreover, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Tanzania cumulatively hold graphite reserves on par with China's, even though China accounted for 77 percent of global graphite output in 2023. According to internal calculations, AGOA beneficiary countries also hold 70 percent of the world's manganese, 89 percent of the world's platinum group metals, 54 percent of cobalt, 23 percent of graphite, and 10 percent of copper. Much of this resource wealth remains untapped, underscoring the vast potential for deepening U.S.-Africa supply chain partnerships in critical minerals. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has financed—or is preparing to finance—mineral projects in a number of AGOA countries, including Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Q2: What is AGOA's impact on critical minerals supply chains?

A2: AGOA offers limited tariff advantages to the mining sector, since most minerals already face relatively low tariffs. Its real value lies in the realm of soft power. In June 2025, China announced that it would expand market access by removing tariffs on all imports from 53 African nations. If the United States were to let AGOA expire and reimpose tariffs on African exports, it would send a damaging signal about the future of U.S. commercial diplomacy on the continent. When African governments see comparable opportunities from both the United States and China in the mining sector, they will be more likely to lean toward Beijing.

Q3: Why is renewing AGOA crucial for building long-term minerals diplomacy?

A3: AGOA is important for building commercial diplomacy. While mining generates significant revenue, it is not a major source of employment. Compared to sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, or services, mining has a much lower labor multiplier. Modern operations are highly mechanized, relying more on advanced technology and machinery than on large workforces. The jobs that are created are typically specialized—geologists, engineers, and metallurgists—limiting wider employment opportunities. Yet Africa urgently needs large-scale job creation, as its population of 1.4 billion is expected to grow to 2.5 billion by 2050. Mining alone is not positioned to meet this demand.

By contrast, AGOA has supported the expansion of more labor-intensive industries, such as textile manufacturing and agriculture. Namibia illustrates this potential. With more than 7.7 million cattle, sheep, and goats, its livestock sector is substantial. After spending 15 years working to meet stringent safety and logistical standards, Namibia became the first African nation to export beef to the United States in 2019. Exports reached 860 tons in 2020 and are projected to grow to 5,000 tons by 2025. Namibia's Meatco has significantly benefIted from duty-free access to the U.S. market through AGOA. Given the infancy of the beef export relationship with the United States, a disruption to AGOA could risk its sustainability and undermine capital investments within the sector.

Sustaining a positive economic relationship with Namibia is key to advancing minerals diplomacy, particularly given its significant mineral wealth. The country is home to the world's fourth-largest uranium reserves—resources that could support the U.S. nuclear renaissance. Today, Namibia hosts three active uranium mines—Rössing, Husab, and Langer Heinrich—all of which have significant Chinese ownership through entities such as the China National Uranium Corporation, China General Nuclear Power Group, and the China Africa Development Fund. The Lofdal heavy rare earths project, partly owned by Japanese investors, produces around 2,000 tons of rare earth oxides annually and contains some of the world's most valuable heavy rare earth metals. In addition, Namibia is on track to become Africa's third-largest lithium producer by 2026.

Namibia's vast resource base, combined with its reputation as one of Africa's most politically stable and well-governed nations, positions it well to develop a growing industrial processing ecosystem. But allowing AGOA to lapse would deal a serious blow to Namibia's labor-intensive beef industry and could undermine future U.S. minerals diplomacy in this resource-rich nation, further ceding ground to China.

Zambia is another important jurisdiction for minerals diplomacy. In the last few years, the U.S. government opened its first-ever Commercial Service Office at the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka and launched a Tripartite Alliance with Zambia and the DRC to advance raw material extraction, processing, and battery manufacturing. The DFC has also provided support to a U.S. company developing one of Zambia's largest copper projects.

Deepening minerals diplomacy will depend on strengthening the bilateral economic relationship. Interviews with Zambian stakeholders reveal mounting frustration among voters that the mining sector is failing to deliver meaningful benefits to the population. Zambia's heavy reliance on copper as its dominant export, coupled with limited economic diversification, has left the country highly exposed to commodity price swings. Expanding U.S. investment into other industries, such as agriculture, textiles, and manufacturing, could ease pressure on the mining industry while simultaneously strengthening Zambia's broader economy and employment generation efforts. Such diversification would generate shared benefits, improve public perceptions of mining, and lessen the risk of abrupt policy shifts that complicate operations for U.S. firms. The tax benefIts derived from AGOA are an important investment incentive. In 2022, 55.3 percent of Zambia's exports to the United States went through AGOA, making its renewal vital to sustaining U.S.-Zambia commercial diplomacy.

More broadly, the expiration of AGOA would likely prompt many African countries to reassess their economic diplomacy strategies. Without preferential access to the U.S. market, governments may find it more attractive—or even necessary—to expand commercial and strategic partnerships with China, which has already established itself as the dominant player in Africa's trade, infrastructure, and minerals sectors. In the critical minerals space in particular, Beijing's willingness to provide financing, infrastructure, and guaranteed offtake agreements could accelerate African alignment with Chinese interests, potentially sidelining U.S. efforts to build resilient, diversified supply chains.

Q4: Is AGOA congruent with the Trump administration's Africa approach?

A4: It is. Since 2016, U.S. policy toward Africa under the Trump administration has placed a strong emphasis on commercial diplomacy, with critical minerals at the forefront. A major step came in 2018 with the creation of the DFC, which made its first equity investment in the critical minerals sector the following year. In 2023, a review was undertaken of the effectiveness of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa (PAC–DBIA), an initiative launched during the Obama administration with the mandate to advise the U.S. president, through the commerce secretary, on strategies to expand the United States' commercial engagement across Africa. The review found that the Trump administration convened more PAC-DBIA meetings than either Obama or Biden.

Since returning to office, Trump's Africa policy has been characterized by senior officials emphasizing business and trade over aid. U.S.-Africa engagement has increasingly focused on critical minerals. One major initiative has been a ''minerals-for-security'' proposal in which President Félix Tshisekedi offered the United States access to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources in exchange for security support. Following negotiations in Washington and Doha, the DRC and Rwanda signed a peace agreement in Washington, D.C., on June 27, 2025. Attention is now turning to advancing mineral cooperation and broader regional economic integration. In July 2025, the DFC approved financing for two critical minerals projects in sub-Saharan Africa. According to its announcement, these investments are intended both to spur regional development and to strengthen U.S. critical mineral supply chains vital for energy, defense, and advanced technologies.

The challenge for the Trump administration is balancing AGOA, which is a unilateral trade preference program, with its strong preference for more bilaterally beneficial economic statecraft instruments.

Q5: What could AGOA 2.O look like?

A5: AGOA can become more bilaterally beneficial. Linking a unilateral trade preference program with a mining investment incentive could significantly boost capital flows into Africa's mining sector. Such a framework could unlock greater capital flows into Africa's mining sector, while ensuring that off-take agreements from new projects are secured with the United States and its allies.

A useful precedent for an investment incentive came from the Inflation Reduction Act's Section 30D tax credit, which offered up to $7,500 for the purchase of a new electric vehicle if its batteries met specific sourcing requirements for critical minerals and manufacturing. To qualify for the minerals portion of the credit, a portion of the battery's mineral content had to be extracted or processed in the United States or a country with a U.S. free trade agreement (FTA). This enabled graphite mined in Mozambique to qualify, since it was processed in Louisiana—yielding benefits to Mozambique's economy while strengthening graphite security for the United States.

Although the 30D provision was recently eliminated, future tax incentives of this kind could be powerful tools to attract mineral investment in AGOA-eligible countries, with the extracted resources routed to the United States or allied partners for processing. The incentive should be industry agnostic, so minerals sourced for defense, semiconductors, and energy would be eligible for the incentive. However, in the meantime, ensuring AGOA's renewal without interruption is essential to signal the strength and continuity of the U.S.-Africa economic relationship.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes,'' and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6500, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Extension Act, introduced by Chairman Jason Smith.

This bill reauthorizes the AGOA program—first established by Congress in 2000. AGOA is a nonreciprocal U.S. trade preference program that encourages trade and investment with sub-Saharan African countries.

Economic benefits of AGOA include:

The bolstering of economic growth.

Promoted economic and political reform.

Improved U.S. economic relations in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

Diversified supply chains.

New markets for American goods and services.

Stronger and diversified American investments.

National security benefits of AGOA include:

Peace and stability in a region that our adversaries, such as China, are trying to exploit.

An American presence in a region rich in critical minerals.

American values are being promoted abroad, resulting in governance improvements that align sub-Saharan African nations with American foreign policy.

AGOA greatly benefits our national security and economy. For those reasons, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6500.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6500, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam 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 motion will be postponed.

HAITI ECONOMIC LIFT PROGRAM EXTENSION ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6504) to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from Haiti under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6504

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 ''Haiti Economic Lift Program Extension Act''.

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF SPECIAL RULES FOR HAITI UNDER CARIBBEAN BASIN ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT.

Section 213A of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (19 U.S.C. 2703a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by amending subparagraph (B)(v)(I) to read as follows:

''(I) APPLICABLE PERCENTAGE.—The term 'applicable percentage' means 60 percent or more on and after December 20, 2017.''; and

(ii) by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

''(C) QUANTITATIVE LIMITATIONS.—The preferential treatment described in subparagraph (A) shall be extended, during each period after the initial applicable 1-year period, to not more than 1.25 percent of the aggregate square meter equivalents of all apparel articles imported into the United States in the most recent 12-month period for which data are available.''; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking ''in each of the 16 succeeding 1-year periods'' each place it appears and inserting ''in any of the succeeding 1-year periods''; and

(2) by amending subsection (h) to read as follows:

''(h) TERMINATION.—The duty-free treatment provided under this section shall remain in effect until December 31, 2028.''.

SEC. 3. RESTORATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN ARTICLES FOR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall proclaim such modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States as may be necessary to restore the eligibility of articles described in subsection (b) for preferential treatment under section 213A of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (19 U.S.C. 2703a).

(b) ARTICLES DESCRIBED.—An article described in this subsection is an article that—

(1) was eligible for preferential treatment under section 213A of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (19 U.S.C. 2703a) on December 20, 2006; and

(2) became ineligible for such treatment after that date and before the date of the enactment of this Act as a result of revisions to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROCLAMATION.—A proclamation under subsection (a) shall take effect not earlier than 2 business days after the President submits to the Committee on Finance of the Senate and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives a report on the proclamation and the reasons for the modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule under the proclamation.

SEC. 4. RETROACTIVE APPLICATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 514 of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1514) or any other provision of law, and subject to paragraph (2), any entry of a covered article to which duty-free treatment or other preferential treatment under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (19 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) would have applied if the entry had been made before September 30, 2025, that was made—

(1) on or after September 30, 2025, and

(2) before the date of the enactment of this Act,

shall be liquidated or reliquidated as though such entry occurred on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) REQUESTS.—A liquidation or reliquidation may be made under paragraph (1) with respect to an entry only if a request therefor is filed with the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act that contains sufficient information to enable such Commissioner—

(1) to locate the entry; or

(2) to reconstruct the entry if it cannot be located.

(c) PAYMENT OF AMOUNTS OWED.—Any amounts owed by the United States pursuant to the liquidation or reliquidation of an entry of a covered article under paragraph (1) shall be paid, without interest of any kind, not later than 90 days after the date of the liquidation or reliquidation (as the case may be).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED ARTICLE.—The term ''covered article'' means an article from Haiti.

(2) ENTRY.—The term ''entry'' includes a withdrawal from warehouse for consumption.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Ms. PLASKETT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6504, the Haiti Economic Lift Program Extension Act, introduced by my colleague, Representative MURPHY.

This legislation extends the HOPE and HELP trade preference programs which provide trade preferences for certain apparel and textile imports from Haiti.

Haiti has endured years of profound hardship, political instability, economic collapse, and repeated natural disasters. As our bill author, Dr. MURPHY, shares from his time serving as a medical missionary in Haiti, these trade programs represent an economic lifeline that supports tens of thousands of jobs and sustain one of the last remaining formal industries in the country.

Failing to extend these programs would further destabilize an already fragile situation, worsening humanitarian conditions. Strengthening economic opportunity in Haiti promotes regional stability, pushes back on malign actors trying to gain influence with our neighbors, and advances U.S. interests. Prosperity in our hemisphere enhances security right here at home.

Renewing HOPE and HELP supports nearshoring and more resilient supply chains, benefiting American workers and businesses, while reducing reliance on distant and unreliable sources.

I commend Dr. MURPHY for his leadership on this issue. Through his numerous trips to Haiti, he has seen firsthand the human consequences of economic collapse. He also understands the value these programs provide to American businesses, including those in North Carolina that have built reliable partnerships in Haiti.

Last month, the Ways and Means Committee passed this bill unanimously, 41–0, a strong bipartisan signal that these programs work.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1740

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 6504, the Haiti Economic Lift Program Extension Act.

For over 15 years, Haiti HOPE/HELP programs have supported both U.S. and Haitian textile industries by granting Haiti duty-free access for apparel and textile products.

Building strong business ties between two neighboring nations, this bill, the Haiti Economic Lift Program Extension Act, reauthorizes the HOPE/HELP trade preference program for an additional 3 years, through December 2028.