

AMENDMENT NO. _____ Calendar No. _____

Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—119th Cong., 2d Sess.

S. 4600

To require a South China Sea diplomatic engagement strategy, and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on _____ and
ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE intended
to be proposed by Ms. DUCKWORTH

Viz:

1 Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the fol-
2 lowing:

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “South China Sea Strat-
5 egy Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. UNITED STATES POLICY.**

7 It is the policy of the United States—

8 (1) to support the importance of the freedom of
9 navigation, overflight, and unfettered commerce in
10 the South China Sea, in a manner consistent with
11 international law to preserve United States economic
12 interests in the region;

1 (2) to commit to a rules-based approach to re-
2 solving maritime disputes;

3 (3) to counter efforts by the People's Republic
4 of China (PRC) to unilaterally change the status
5 quo and treat the South China Sea as its unilateral
6 dominion, undermining regional stability and contra-
7 vening the PRC's prior commitments to resolve dis-
8 putes peacefully and through appropriate legal
9 venues; and

10 (4) to engage with allies and partners in a con-
11 certed, coordinated manner to support a strategic,
12 consistent approach to diplomatic engagement on
13 issues and crises that affect United States interests
14 in the South China Sea, including to ensure the
15 safety of United States citizens in the region.

16 **SEC. 3. SOUTH CHINA SEA DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT**
17 **STRATEGY.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
19 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State
20 shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, sub-
21 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a Strat-
22 egy for Diplomatic Engagement on the South China Sea
23 to ensure that the United States Government is operating
24 strategically to maximize our efficient engagement on
25 South China Sea matters.

1 (b) ELEMENTS.—The Strategy listed in subsection
2 (a) shall—

3 (1) describe the overarching goals of United
4 States engagement with allies and partners, includ-
5 ing with littoral states, on security, diplomatic, legal,
6 and economic matters in the South China Sea;

7 (2) designate an office at the Department of
8 State tasked with the lead responsibility for coordi-
9 nating the execution of each goal described in para-
10 graph (1);

11 (3) analyze the successes of the Department of
12 State’s existing mechanisms, programs, and forums
13 for advancing United States goals in the South
14 China Sea through bilateral, multilateral, sub-
15 national, civil society, and private sector avenues
16 with allies and partners, including littoral states,
17 and identify gaps in engagement;

18 (4) detail plans to deepen bilateral engagement
19 with each littoral state around pressures, threats,
20 and opportunities in the South China Sea identified
21 as priorities in previous bilateral engagements;

22 (5) detail plans to convene and increase the fre-
23 quency of collective engagements with littoral states,
24 including Taiwan and additional allies and partners

1 as appropriate, around themes of shared importance,
2 including—

3 (A) bolstering defense capabilities;

4 (B) reinforcing maritime law enforcement
5 capacity and governance;

6 (C) responding to grey-zone tactics, includ-
7 ing coordinated illegal, unreported, and unregu-
8 lated fishing;

9 (D) managing maritime territorial disputes
10 to reduce the likelihood of security crises and
11 conflicts;

12 (E) preparing crisis management and re-
13 sponse mechanisms to avoid unnecessary esca-
14 lation;

15 (F) building resilience to foreign malign in-
16 fluence and interference in the South China
17 Sea;

18 (G) supporting economic development and
19 resilience to economic coercion from foreign ad-
20 versaries; and

21 (H) addressing additional factors assessed
22 by the Secretary of State to be causing a direct
23 risk to United States interests in the South
24 China Sea; and

1 (6) detail plans for coordination with the inter-
2 agency and foreign governments to address crisis
3 management for scenarios below the threshold of
4 armed conflict that would require heightened inter-
5 agency and international engagement.

6 (c) CLASSIFICATION.—The strategy submitted under
7 subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form but
8 may include a classified annex.

9 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY EXECUTION.**

10 (a) IDENTIFICATION OF NECESSARY PROGRAMS AND
11 RESOURCES.—Not later than 360 days after the date of
12 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall
13 identify and submit to the appropriate congressional com-
14 mittees any necessary program, policy, or budgetary re-
15 sources required to support implementation of the Strat-
16 egy for Diplomatic Engagement on the South China Sea
17 for fiscal years 2027, 2028, and 2029.

18 (b) BRIEFING.—Not later than 30 days after the sub-
19 mission of the assessment described in subsection (a), the
20 Secretary of State shall brief the appropriate congres-
21 sional committees on the implementation of the Strategy
22 for Diplomatic Engagement on the South China Sea.

23 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

24 In this Act:

1 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees” means—

4 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of
5 the Senate; and

6 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
7 the House of Representatives.

8 (2) LITTORAL STATES.—The term “littoral
9 states” means—

10 (A) Brunei;

11 (B) Indonesia;

12 (C) Malaysia;

13 (D) the Philippines; and

14 (E) Vietnam.

15 **SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

16 (a) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION REGARDING CONTIN-
17 UED UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD TAIWAN AND THE
18 GOVERNMENT OF THE PRC.—Nothing in this Act may
19 be construed as a change to the One China Policy of the
20 United States, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations
21 Act (22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.), the three United States-
22 People’s Republic of China Joint Communiqués, and the
23 Six Assurances.