

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1083

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 15, 2021

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

A BILL

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

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Southeast Asia Strat-
5 egy Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Southeast Asia is the fulcrum of the Indo-
9 Pacific region, providing both a geographic and mar-
10 itime link between East and South Asia.

1 (2) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
2 (ASEAN), a regional intergovernmental organiza-
3 tion, remains central to the Indo-Pacific region’s in-
4 stitutional architecture and to United States foreign
5 policy toward the region.

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

11 (4) The United States has committed to deepen
12 longstanding alliances and partnerships with a range
13 of Southeast Asian nations, including by promoting
14 our shared values, democracy, human rights, and
15 civil society.

16 (5) Since the end of the Second World War,
17 United States investments in strengthening alliances
18 and partnerships with Southeast Asian nations have
19 yielded tremendous returns for United States inter-
20 ests, as working with and through these alliances
21 and partnerships have increased the region’s ability
22 to address common challenges.

23 (6) ASEAN member states are critical United
24 States security partners in protecting the freedom
25 and openness of the maritime domain and pre-

1 venting violent extremism and the trafficking of
2 weapons of mass destruction.

3 (7) ASEAN member states have contributed
4 significantly to regional disaster monitoring and
5 management and emergency response through initia-
6 tives such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for
7 Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management,
8 an inter-governmental organization that facilitates
9 coordination and cooperation among ASEAN mem-
10 ber states and international organizations in times
11 of emergency.

12 (8) According to the 2018 ASEAN Business
13 Outlook Survey, ASEAN member states are vital to
14 the prosperity of the United States economy and ex-
15 ports to ASEAN economies support more than
16 500,000 jobs in the United States.

17 (9) The United States and ASEAN have estab-
18 lished a new strategic partnership that will enhance
19 cooperation across the economic, political-security,
20 and people-to-people pillars of the relationship.

21 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

22 It is the policy of the United States to—

23 (1) deepen cooperation with ASEAN and
24 ASEAN member states in the interest of promoting

1 peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific re-
2 gion;

3 (2) affirm the importance of ASEAN centrality
4 and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving institu-
5 tional architecture of the Indo-Pacific region; and

6 (3) establish and communicate a comprehensive
7 strategy toward the Indo-Pacific region that articu-
8 lates—

9 (A) the role and importance of Southeast
10 Asia to the United States;

11 (B) the value of the United States-ASEAN
12 relationship;

13 (C) the mutual interests of all parties;

14 (D) the concrete and material benefits all
15 nations derive from strong United States en-
16 gagement and leadership in Southeast Asia; and

17 (E) efforts to forge and maintain ASEAN
18 consensus, especially on key issues of political
19 and security concern to the region, such as the
20 South China Sea.

21 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTHEAST**
22 **ASIA AND ASEAN.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
24 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
25 in consultation with the heads of other Federal depart-

1 ments and agencies as appropriate, shall develop and sub-
2 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a com-
3 prehensive strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia
4 and ASEAN.

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

7 (1) A statement of enduring United States in-
8 terests in Southeast Asia and a description of efforts
9 to bolster the effectiveness of ASEAN.

10 (2) A description of efforts to—

11 (A) deepen and expand Southeast Asian al-
12 liances, partnerships, and multilateral engage-
13 ments, including efforts to expand broad based
14 and inclusive economic growth, security ties, se-
15 curity cooperation and interoperability, eco-
16 nomic connectivity, and expand opportunities
17 for ASEAN to work with other like-minded
18 partners in the region; and

19 (B) encourage like-minded partners outside
20 of the Indo-Pacific region to engage with
21 ASEAN.

22 (3) A summary of initiatives across the whole
23 of the United States Government to strengthen the
24 United States partnership with Southeast Asian na-
25 tions and ASEAN, including to promote broad based

1 and inclusive economic growth, trade, investment,
2 energy innovation and sustainability, public-private
3 partnerships, physical and digital infrastructure de-
4 velopment, education, disaster management, public
5 health and global health security, and economic, po-
6 litical, and public diplomacy in Southeast Asia.

7 (4) A summary of initiatives across the whole
8 of the United States Government to enhance the ca-
9 pacity of Southeast Asian nations with respect to en-
10 forcing international law and multilateral sanctions,
11 and initiatives to cooperate with ASEAN as an insti-
12 tution in these areas.

13 (5) A summary of initiatives across the whole
14 of the United States Government to promote human
15 rights and democracy, to strengthen the rule of law,
16 civil society, and transparent governance, to combat
17 disinformation and to protect the integrity of elec-
18 tions from outside influence.

19 (6) A summary of initiatives to promote secu-
20 rity cooperation and security assistance within
21 Southeast Asian nations, including—

22 (A) maritime security and maritime do-
23 main awareness initiatives for protecting the
24 maritime commons and supporting international

1 law and freedom of navigation in the South
2 China Sea; and

3 (B) efforts to combat terrorism, human
4 trafficking, piracy, and illegal fishing, and pro-
5 mote more open, reliable routes for sea lines of
6 communication.

7 (c) DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGY.—For the purposes
8 of assuring allies and partners in Southeast Asia and
9 deepening United States engagement with ASEAN, the
10 Secretary of State shall direct each United States chief
11 of mission to ASEAN and its member states to distribute
12 the strategy required by subsection (a) to host govern-
13 ments.

14 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
15 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
16 gressional committees” means—

17 (1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
18 Committee on Armed Services of the House of Rep-
19 resentatives; and

20 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
21 the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.

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