

TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO SUBMIT TO CONGRESS A REPORT CONTAINING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE, COST, AND FEASIBILITY OF A TRANS-ATLANTIC SUBMARINE FIBER OPTIC CABLE CONNECTING THE CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES, THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS, GHANA, AND NIGERIA

JUNE 12, 2025.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. GUTHRIE, from the Committee on Energy and Commerce,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1737]

The Committee on Energy and Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1737) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to submit to Congress a report containing an assessment of the value, cost, and feasibility of a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the contiguous United States, the United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Nigeria, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

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PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

H.R. 1737, was introduced by Delegate Stacey E. Plaskett (D–VI) and Representative Russ Fulcher (R–ID) on February 27, 2025. The bill directs the Secretary of Commerce acting through the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information, to submit to Congress a report containing an assessment of the value, cost, and feasibility of a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the contiguous United States, the United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Nigeria.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Hundreds of undersea telecommunications cables form the backbone of the global Internet, connecting government entities, businesses, and consumers in many countries around the world. According to the Congressional Research Service, nearly 500 undersea cables—both privately and state-owned—connect every continent except for Antarctica, with 99 percent of transoceanic communications being transmitted by privately-owned cables.¹

This legislation will provide Congress with information regarding the value, cost, and feasibility of a trans-Atlantic cable that directly connects the United States and African continent, where one does not currently exist.² Given efforts by untrusted, state-backed communications providers to deploy infrastructure and provide wired and wireless services in countries across the African continent,³ there is a clear strategic and national security interest for the United States to ensure the highest possible level of security for government and non-government communications alike.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held a legislative hearing on May 23, 2023, entitled “Oversight and Reauthorization of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.” The Subcommittee received testimony from the following witnesses:

- Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

On July 12, 2023, the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology met in open markup session and forwarded H.R. 3385,⁴ as amended, to the full Committee by voice vote. On July 27, 2023, the full Committee on Energy and Commerce met in open markup session and ordered H.R. 3385, as amended, favorably reported to the House by a record vote of 41 yeas and 0 nays.

On March 4, 2025, the full Committee on Energy and Commerce met in open markup session and ordered H.R. 1737, without amendment, favorably reported to the House by voice vote.

¹ Congressional Research Service, *Undersea Telecommunication Cables: Technology Overview and Issues for Congress* (Sept. 13, 2022).

² Congressional Research Service, *Protection of Undersea Telecommunication Cables: Issues for Congress* at 3 (Aug. 07, 2023).

³ David Ehl, *Africa Embraces Huawei Tech Despite Security Concerns*, Deutsche Welle (Feb. 08, 2022) (available at <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-embraces-huawei-technology-despite-security-concerns/a-60665700>). See also, Greg Noone, *How Huawei is Winning Over the Global South*, Tech Monitor (Dec. 22, 2022) (available at <https://techmonitor.ai/future-of-telecoms/why-huawei-is-winning-over-the-global-south>).

⁴ H.R. 3385 in the 118th Congress was reintroduced in the 119th Congress as H.R. 1737.

COMMITTEE VOTES

Clause 3(b) of rule XIII requires the Committee to list the record votes on the motion to report legislation and amendments thereto. There were no record votes taken in connection with ordering H.R. 1737 reported.

OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII, the Committee held hearings and made findings that are reflected in this report.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY, AND TAX EXPENDITURES

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII, the Committee finds that H.R. 1737 would result in no new or increased budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII, at the time this report was filed, the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 was not available.

FEDERAL MANDATES STATEMENT

The Committee adopts as its own the estimate of Federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this legislation is to obtain a report containing an assessment of the value, cost, and feasibility of building a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the contiguous United States, the United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Nigeria for purposes of promoting the national security of the United States.

DUPLICATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(5) of rule XIII, no provision of H.R. 1737 is known to be duplicative of another Federal program, including any program that was included in a report to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.

RELATED COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(6) of rule XIII, the following hearings were used to develop or consider H.R. 1737:

- The Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held a legislative hearing on May 23, 2023, entitled “Oversight and Reauthorization of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.” The Subcommittee received testimony from:

◦ Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII, the Committee adopts as its own the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

earmark, limited tax benefits, and limited tariff benefits

Pursuant to clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI, the Committee finds that H.R. 1737 contains no earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

No advisory committees within the meaning of section 5(b) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act were created by this legislation.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATION

Sec. 1. Assessment of trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable

Section 1 directs the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, to submit a report to Congress on the value, cost, and feasibility of a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the contiguous United States, the United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Nigeria to enhance the national security of the United States. The report must include an assessment of the digital security, national security, and economic opportunities associated with such a submarine fiber optic cable. Additionally, the report must include information regarding the lifespan and security of submarine fiber optic cables currently connecting the contiguous United States to the United States Virgin Islands, as well as the current readiness of communications infrastructure in the United States Virgin Islands to support a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable, among other things.

Section 1 also provides definitions for the terms used in this section.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

This legislation does not amend any existing Federal statute.