

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2236

To establish a comprehensive United States Government initiative to build the capacity of young leaders and entrepreneurs in Africa, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 10, 2025

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## A BILL

To establish a comprehensive United States Government initiative to build the capacity of young leaders and entrepreneurs in Africa, and for other purposes.

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 TITLES.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Young African Leaders  
5 Initiative Act of 2025” or the “YALI Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

1           (1) the Young African Leaders Initiative,  
2           launched in 2010, is a signature effort to invest in  
3           the next generation of African leaders;

4           (2) Africa is a continent of strategic importance  
5           and it is vital for the United States to support  
6           strong and enduring partnerships with the next gen-  
7           eration of African leaders;

8           (3) the United States Government should  
9           prioritize investments to build the capacity of emerg-  
10          ing young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, in-  
11          cluding through efforts that—

12                   (A) enhance leadership skills;

13                   (B) encourage entrepreneurship;

14                   (C) strengthen public administration and  
15          the role of civil society;

16                   (D) enhance peace and security in their re-  
17          spective countries of origin and across Africa;  
18          and

19                   (E) connect young African leaders con-  
20          tinentally and globally across the private, civic,  
21          and public sectors;

22          (4) youth in Africa have a positive impact on  
23          efforts to foster economic growth, improve public  
24          sector transparency and governance, and counter ex-

1 tremism, and should be an area of focus for United  
2 States outreach on the African continent; and

3 (5) the Secretary of State should—

4 (A) increase the number of fellows from  
5 Africa participating in the Mandela Washington  
6 Fellowship above the estimated 700 fellows who  
7 participated during fiscal year 2024; and

8 (B) identify additional ways to connect  
9 YALI alumni to United States public and pri-  
10 vate resources and institutions.

11 **SEC. 3. YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE PROGRAM.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Young  
13 African Leaders Initiative (referred to in this section as  
14 “YALI”), which shall be carried out by the Secretary of  
15 State.

16 (b) PURPOSE.—YALI shall seek to build the capacity  
17 of young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa in the  
18 areas of business, civic engagement, or public administra-  
19 tion, including through efforts that—

20 (1) support young African leaders by offering  
21 professional development, training, and networking  
22 opportunities, particularly in the areas of leadership,  
23 innovation, civic engagement, elections, human  
24 rights, entrepreneurship, good governance, peace and  
25 security, and public administration; and

1           (2) provide increased economic and technical  
2 assistance to young African leaders to promote eco-  
3 nomic growth, strengthen ties between United States  
4 and African businesses, build resilience to predatory  
5 lending practices, and improve capacity in key eco-  
6 nomic areas such as tendering, bidding, and contract  
7 negotiations, budget management and oversight,  
8 anti-corruption, and establishment of clear policy  
9 and regulatory practices.

10 (c) FELLOWSHIPS.—

11           (1) IN GENERAL.—YALI shall support the par-  
12 ticipation in the United States in the Mandela  
13 Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders  
14 of fellows from Africa who—

15                   (A) are between 25 and 35 years of age;

16                   (B) have demonstrated strong capabilities  
17 in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service,  
18 and leadership; and

19                   (C) have had a positive impact in their  
20 communities, organizations, or institutions.

21           (2) OVERSIGHT.—The fellowships described in  
22 paragraph (1) shall be overseen by the Secretary of  
23 State through the Bureau of Educational and Cul-  
24 tural Affairs.

1           (3) ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary of State shall  
2       establish and publish—

3           (A) eligibility criteria for participation as a  
4       fellow under paragraph (1); and

5           (B) criteria for determining which eligible  
6       applicants will be selected.

7       (d) RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES.—Subject to the ap-  
8       proval of the Secretary of State, United States citizens  
9       may—

10           (1) engage in reciprocal exchanges in connec-  
11       tion with alumni of the fellowship described in sub-  
12       section (c); and

13           (2) collaborate on projects with such fellowship  
14       alumni.

15       (e) REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CENTERS AND NET-  
16       WORKS.—The Administrator of the United States Agency  
17       for International Development shall establish—

18           (1) not fewer than 4 regional leadership centers  
19       in sub-Saharan Africa to offer in-person and online  
20       training throughout the year on business and entre-  
21       preneurship, civic leadership, and public manage-  
22       ment to young African leaders who—

23           (A) are between 18 and 35 years of age;

24           (B) have demonstrated strong capabilities  
25       in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service

1 and leadership, and peace-building and conflict  
2 resolution; and

3 (C) have had a positive impact in their  
4 communities, organizations, or institutions; and

5 (2) an online network that provides information  
6 and courses on, and connections with leaders in, the  
7 private and public sectors of Africa.

8 (f) ACTIVITIES.—

9 (1) UNITED STATES-BASED ACTIVITIES.—The  
10 Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of  
11 relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall  
12 oversee all United States-based activities carried out  
13 under YALI, including—

14 (A) the participation of Mandela Wash-  
15 ington Fellows in a 6-week Leadership Institute  
16 at a United States educational institution in  
17 business, civic engagement, or public manage-  
18 ment, including academic sessions, site visits,  
19 professional networking opportunities, leader-  
20 ship training, community service, and organized  
21 cultural activities; and

22 (B) the participation by Mandela Wash-  
23 ington fellows in an annual Mandela Wash-  
24 ington Fellowship Summit, to provide such Fel-  
25 lows the opportunity to meet with United States

1           leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit  
2           sectors.

3           (2) AFRICA-BASED ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary  
4           of State, in coordination with the Administrator for  
5           the United States Agency for International Develop-  
6           ment and the heads of other relevant Federal de-  
7           partments and agencies, should continue to support  
8           YALI activities in sub-Saharan Africa, including—

9                   (A) continued leadership training and  
10                  other professional development opportunities for  
11                  Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young Af-  
12                  rican Leaders alumni upon their return to their  
13                  home countries, including online courses, tech-  
14                  nical assistance, and access to funding;

15                  (B) training for young African leaders at  
16                  regional leadership centers established pursuant  
17                  to subsection (e), and through online and in-  
18                  person courses offered by such centers; and

19                  (C) opportunities for networking and en-  
20                  gagement with—

21                          (i) alumni of the Mandela Washington  
22                          Fellowship for Young African Leaders;

23                          (ii) alumni of programs at regional  
24                          leadership centers established pursuant to  
25                          subsection (e);

1 (iii) United States and like-minded  
2 diplomatic missions, business leaders, and  
3 others as appropriate; and

4 (iv) where practicable and appro-  
5 priate, other United States-funded regional  
6 leadership programs, including the Young  
7 Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative  
8 (YSEALI), the Young Leaders of the  
9 Americas Initiative (YLAI), the Young Pa-  
10 cific Leaders (YPL), and the Young  
11 Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative  
12 (YTILI), and through Department of  
13 State programs such as the Community  
14 Engagement Exchange Program and other  
15 initiatives.

16 (3) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of  
17 State, in coordination with the Administrator of the  
18 United States Agency for International Development  
19 and the heads of other relevant Federal departments  
20 and agencies, shall carry out this subsection by seek-  
21 ing to partner with the private sector—

22 (A) to pursue public-private partnerships;

23 (B) to leverage private sector expertise;

24 (C) to expand networking opportunities;

25 and

1 (D) to identify funding opportunities and  
2 fellowship and employment opportunities for  
3 YALI.

4 (g) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than 180  
5 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
6 retary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of  
7 the United States Agency for International Development  
8 and the heads of other relevant Federal departments and  
9 agencies, shall submit a plan to the appropriate congres-  
10 sional committees for implementing YALI, including—

11 (1) a description of clearly defined program  
12 goals, targets, and planned outcomes for each year  
13 and for the duration of implementation of the pro-  
14 gram;

15 (2) a strategy to monitor and evaluate the pro-  
16 gram and progress made toward achieving such  
17 goals, targets, and planned outcomes; and

18 (3) a strategy to ensure the program is pro-  
19 moting United States foreign policy goals in Africa,  
20 including ensuring that the program is clearly  
21 branded, paired with robust public diplomacy efforts,  
22 and incorporates diversity among participants as  
23 practicable, including countries and communities in  
24 Africa facing economic distress, civil conflict,  
25 marginalization, and other challenges.

1 (h) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
2 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for  
3 the following 4 years, the Secretary of State, in coordina-  
4 tion with the Administrator of the United States Agency  
5 for International Development, shall submit to the appro-  
6 priate congressional committees, and publish in a publicly  
7 accessible, internet-based form, a report that includes—

8 (1) a description of the progress made toward  
9 achieving the goals, targets, and planned outcomes  
10 described in subsection (g)(1), including an overview  
11 of the program implemented in the previous year  
12 and an estimated number of beneficiaries;

13 (2) an assessment of how YALI is contributing  
14 to and promoting United States-Africa relations,  
15 particularly in areas of increased private sector in-  
16 vestment, trade promotion, support to civil society,  
17 improved public administration, promoting peace  
18 and security, and fostering entrepreneurship and  
19 youth empowerment;

20 (3) recommendations for improvements or  
21 changes to YALI and the implementation plan, if  
22 any, that would improve their effectiveness during  
23 subsequent years of YALI's implementation; and

24 (4) for the first report submitted under this  
25 subsection, an assessment of the feasibility of ex-

1       panding YALI to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya,  
2       and Egypt.

3       (i) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term “ap-  
4       propriate congressional committees” means—

5               (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the  
6       Senate;

7               (2) the Committee on Appropriations of the  
8       Senate;

9               (3) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the  
10      House of Representatives; and

11              (4) the Committee on Appropriations of the  
12      House of Representatives.

13      (j) SUNSET.—This section shall cease to have effect  
14      on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment  
15      of this Act.

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