

Calendar No. 324

119TH CONGRESS
2^D 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.

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

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Reported by Mr. RISCH, with an amendment

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

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”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

2 It is the sense of Congress that—

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

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

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

14 (A) enhance leadership skills;

15 (B) encourage entrepreneurship;

16 (C) strengthen public administration and
17 the role of civil society;

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

21 (E) connect young African leaders con-
22 tinently and globally across the private, civic,
23 and public sectors;

24 (4) youth in Africa have a positive impact on
25 efforts to foster economic growth, improve public
26 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 (e); 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 (YLAIA), the Young Pa-
 10 cific Leaders (YPL), and the Young
 11 Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative
 12 (YTIIL); 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.

16 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLES.**

17 *This Act may be cited as the “Young African Leaders*
18 *Initiative Act of 2026” or the “YALI Act of 2026”.*

19 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

20 *It is the sense of Congress that—*

21 (1) *the Young African Leaders Initiative,*
22 *launched in 2010, is a signature effort to invest in the*
23 *next generation of African leaders;*

24 (2) *Africa is a continent of strategic importance*
25 *and it is vital for the United States to support strong*

1 *and enduring partnerships with the next generation*
2 *of African leaders;*

3 *(3) the United States Government should*
4 *prioritize investments to build the capacity of emerg-*
5 *ing young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, in-*
6 *cluding through efforts that—*

7 *(A) enhance leadership skills;*

8 *(B) encourage entrepreneurship;*

9 *(C) strengthen public administration and*
10 *the role of civil society;*

11 *(D) enhance peace and security in their re-*
12 *spective countries of origin and across Africa;*
13 *and*

14 *(E) connect young African leaders continen-*
15 *tally and globally across the private, civic, and*
16 *public sectors; and*

17 *(4) youth in Africa have a positive impact on ef-*
18 *forts to foster economic growth, improve public sector*
19 *transparency and governance, and counter extremism,*
20 *and should be an area of focus for United States out-*
21 *reach on the African continent.*

22 **SEC. 3. YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE.**

23 *(a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Young Afri-*
24 *can Leaders Initiative (referred to in this section as*

1 “YALI”), which shall be carried out by the Secretary of
2 State.

3 (b) *PURPOSE.*—YALI shall seek to build the capacity
4 of young African leaders in sub-Saharan Africa in the areas
5 of business, civic engagement, or public administration, in-
6 cluding through efforts that—

7 (1) support young African leaders by offering
8 professional development, training, and networking
9 opportunities, particularly in the areas of leadership,
10 innovation, civic engagement, elections, internation-
11 ally recognized human rights, entrepreneurship, good
12 governance, peace and security, and public adminis-
13 tration; and

14 (2) provide increased economic and technical as-
15 sistance to young African leaders to promote economic
16 growth, strengthen ties between United States and Af-
17 rican businesses, build resilience to predatory lending
18 practices, and improve capacity in key economic
19 areas such as tendering, bidding, and contract nego-
20 tiations, budget management and oversight, anti-cor-
21 ruption, and establishment of clear policy and regu-
22 latory practices.

23 (c) *FELLOWSHIPS.*—

24 (1) *IN GENERAL.*—YALI shall support the par-
25 ticipation in the United States in the Mandela Wash-

1 *ington Fellowship for Young African Leaders of fel-*
2 *lows from Africa who—*

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

4 *(B) have demonstrated strong capabilities*
5 *in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service,*
6 *and leadership; and*

7 *(C) have had a positive impact in their*
8 *communities, organizations, or institutions.*

9 *(2) OVERSIGHT.—The fellowships described in*
10 *paragraph (1) shall be overseen by the Secretary of*
11 *State through the Bureau of Educational and Cul-*
12 *tural Affairs.*

13 *(3) ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary of State shall*
14 *establish and publish—*

15 *(A) eligibility criteria for participation as*
16 *a fellow under paragraph (1); and*

17 *(B) criteria for determining which eligible*
18 *applicants will be selected.*

19 *(d) RECIPROCAL EXCHANGES.—Subject to the ap-*
20 *proval of the Secretary of State, United States citizens*
21 *may—*

22 *(1) engage in reciprocal exchanges in connection*
23 *with alumni of the fellowship described in subsection*
24 *(c); and*

1 (2) *collaborate on projects with such fellowship*
2 *alumni.*

3 (e) *ACTIVITIES.*—

4 (1) *UNITED STATES-BASED ACTIVITIES.*—*The*
5 *Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of*
6 *relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall over-*
7 *see all United States-based activities carried out*
8 *under YALI, including—*

9 (A) *the participation of Mandela Wash-*
10 *ington Fellows in a 6-week Leadership Institute*
11 *at a United States educational institution in*
12 *business, civic engagement, or public manage-*
13 *ment, including academic sessions, site visits,*
14 *professional networking opportunities, leadership*
15 *training, community service, and organized cul-*
16 *tural activities; and*

17 (B) *the participation by Mandela Wash-*
18 *ington fellows in an annual Mandela Wash-*
19 *ington Fellowship Summit, to provide such Fel-*
20 *lows the opportunity to meet with United States*
21 *leaders from the private, public, and nonprofit*
22 *sectors.*

23 (2) *IMPLEMENTATION.*—*The Secretary of State,*
24 *in coordination with the heads of other relevant Fed-*
25 *eral departments and agencies, shall carry out this*

1 *subsection by seeking to partner with the private sec-*
2 *tor—*

3 *(A) to pursue public-private partnerships;*

4 *(B) to leverage private sector expertise;*

5 *(C) to expand networking opportunities;*

6 *and*

7 *(D) to identify funding opportunities and*
8 *fellowship and employment opportunities for*
9 *YALI.*

10 *(f) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than 180 days*
11 *after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary*
12 *of State, in coordination with the heads of other relevant*
13 *Federal departments and agencies, shall submit a plan to*
14 *the appropriate congressional committees for implementing*
15 *YALI, including—*

16 *(1) a description of clearly defined program*
17 *goals, targets, and planned outcomes for each year*
18 *and for the duration of implementation of the pro-*
19 *gram;*

20 *(2) a strategy to monitor and evaluate the pro-*
21 *gram and progress made toward achieving such goals,*
22 *targets, and planned outcomes; and*

23 *(3) a strategy to ensure the program is pro-*
24 *moting United States foreign policy goals in Africa,*
25 *including ensuring that the program is clearly brand-*

1 *ed, paired with robust public diplomacy efforts, and*
2 *incorporates participants from a variety of countries,*
3 *including communities in Africa facing economic dis-*
4 *tress, civil conflict, persecution, and other challenges.*

5 *(g) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of*
6 *the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for the*
7 *following 4 years, the Secretary of State shall submit to*
8 *the appropriate congressional committees, and publish in*
9 *a publicly accessible, internet-based form, a report that in-*
10 *cludes—*

11 *(1) a description of the progress made toward*
12 *achieving the goals, targets, and planned outcomes re-*
13 *ferred to in subsection (f)(1), including an overview*
14 *of the program implemented in the previous year and*
15 *an estimated number of beneficiaries;*

16 *(2) an assessment of how YALI is contributing*
17 *to and promoting United States-Africa relations, par-*
18 *ticularly in areas of increased private sector invest-*
19 *ment, trade promotion, support to civil society, im-*
20 *proved public administration, promoting peace and*
21 *security, and fostering entrepreneurship and youth*
22 *empowerment; and*

23 *(3) recommendations for improvements or*
24 *changes to YALI and the implementation plan, if*

1 *any, that would improve their effectiveness during*
2 *subsequent years of YALI's implementation; and*

3 *(h) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term “appro-*
4 *priate congressional committees” means—*

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

7 *(2) the Committee on Appropriations of the Sen-*
8 *ate;*

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

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