

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3612

To establish a new educational exchange program to strengthen domestic mining education, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 12, 2026

Ms. ROSEN (for herself, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To establish a new educational exchange program to strengthen domestic mining education, 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 TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Critical Mineral Min-
5 ing Education Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the United States mining industry
8 and, more broadly, mining and mineral processing and re-
9 fining, is widely reported as facing a significant personnel

1 shortage. This shortage is driven by an aging workforce,
 2 declining numbers of graduates entering mining careers,
 3 and difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled workers.
 4 Fifty percent of the current mining workforce is expected
 5 to retire within the next 5 years. In 2023, only 14 United
 6 States universities and colleges had mining and mining en-
 7 gineer programs. Downstream segments, such as ore proc-
 8 essing, refining, and metallurgy, are affected by the same
 9 workforce trends. Institutions and personnel from allied
 10 countries with mining expertise can share their knowledge
 11 and experience with the United States workforce through
 12 education exchange programs.

13 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

14 The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act
 15 of 1961 (Public Law 87–256; 22 U.S.C. 2451 et seq.) is
 16 amended by inserting after section 101 the following:

17 **“SEC. 101A. DEFINITIONS.**

18 “In this Act:

19 “(1) **ADVANCED DEGREE.**—The term ‘advanced
 20 degree’ means a degree from an institution of higher
 21 education that is a master’s or doctoral degree.

22 “(2) **CRITICAL MINERAL.**—The term ‘critical
 23 mineral’—

24 “(A) has the meaning given such term in
 25 section 7002(a)(3) of the Energy Act of 2020

1 (division Z of Public Law 116–260; 30 U.S.C.
2 1606(a)(3)); and

3 “(B) includes gold, and copper, and any
4 other mineral or mineral material the Secretary
5 of State determines—

6 “(i) to be essential to the economic or
7 national security of the United States; and

8 “(ii) has a supply chain vulnerable to
9 disruption.

10 “(3) EXCESS FOREIGN CURRENCIES.—The term
11 ‘excess foreign currencies’ means foreign currencies,
12 which, if acquired by the United States—

13 “(A) would be in excess of the normal re-
14 quirements of departments, agencies, and em-
15 bassies of the United States for such cur-
16 rencies, as determined by the President; and

17 “(B) would be available for the use of the
18 United States Government under applicable
19 agreements with the foreign country concerned.

20 “(4) FEDERAL EMPLOYEE.—The term ‘Federal
21 employee’—

22 “(A) means any employee described in sub-
23 paragraphs (A) through (F) of section
24 7342(a)(1) of title 5, United States Code; and

1 “(B) does not include a person described
2 in subparagraph (G) of such section.

3 “(5) GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED INTER-
4 NATIONAL EXCHANGES AND TRAINING.—The term
5 ‘Government-sponsored international exchanges and
6 training’ means the movement of people between
7 countries, financed wholly or in part with United
8 States Government funds—

9 “(A) to promote the sharing of ideas;

10 “(B) to develop skills; and

11 “(C) to foster mutual understanding and
12 cooperation.

13 “(6) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—
14 The term ‘institution of higher education’ has the
15 meaning given such term in section 101(a) of the
16 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

17 “(7) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNI-
18 VERSITY.—The term ‘historically Black college and
19 university’ has the meaning given the term ‘part B
20 institution’ in section 322(2) of the Higher Edu-
21 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061(2)).

22 “(8) MINING EDUCATION PROGRAM.—The term
23 ‘Mining Education Program’ means an academic
24 program related to the mining industry.

1 “(9) MINING INDUSTRY.—The term ‘mining in-
2 dustry’ means the mining industry of the United
3 States, which consists of activities related to natu-
4 rally occurring metal and nonmetal critical minerals,
5 including—

6 “(A) geological mapping, geophysical sur-
7 veying, geochemical sampling, and management
8 of geological data;

9 “(B) mineral system analysis, exploration,
10 and resource delineation, including exploratory
11 drilling and resource estimation and classifica-
12 tion;

13 “(C) project development, feasibility stud-
14 ies, financing, and permitting;

15 “(D) mine construction, extraction, and
16 operational support activities;

17 “(E) mineral processing, beneficiation,
18 smelting, refining, chemical conversion, and
19 separation;

20 “(F) material conversion and advanced
21 materials manufacturing;

22 “(G) transportation, logistics, and han-
23 dling of intermediate and finished material
24 products; and

1 “(H) reclamation, remediation, reuse, recy-
 2 cling, and recovery of materials from primary
 3 and secondary sources, including mine waste
 4 and end-of-life products.

5 “(10) MINING PROFESSION.—The term ‘mining
 6 profession’ means the body of jobs directly related to
 7 the mining industry.

8 “(11) MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTION.—The
 9 term ‘minority-serving institution’ means an eligible
 10 institution under section 371(a) of the Higher Edu-
 11 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).”.

12 **SEC. 4. CRITICAL MINERAL MINING FELLOWSHIP PRO-**
 13 **GRAM.**

14 The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act
 15 of 1961, as amended by section 3, is further amended by
 16 adding at the end the following:

17 **“SEC. 116. CRITICAL MINERAL MINING FELLOWSHIP PRO-**
 18 **GRAM.**

19 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is authorized to be es-
 20 tablished the Critical Mineral Mining Fellowship Program
 21 (referred to in this section as the ‘Fellowship Program’)
 22 within the J. William Fulbright Educational Exchange
 23 Program.

24 “(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Fellowship
 25 Program are—

1 “(1) to advance foreign policy priorities of the
2 United States by promoting studies, research, and
3 international exchange in the mining industry;

4 “(2) to send United States students to mining
5 institutions abroad to build the capacity of the
6 United States mining workforce;

7 “(3) to develop a robust and skilled workforce
8 that can support and fill the gaps of the United
9 States growing domestic critical mineral supply
10 chain; and

11 “(4) to reduce dependency on foreign energy
12 and critical mineral supplies and enhance competi-
13 tiveness of the United States within the global crit-
14 ical mineral marketplace.

15 “(c) ADMINISTRATION.—The Bureau of Educational
16 and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State (referred
17 to in this section as the ‘Bureau’) shall administer the Fel-
18 lowship Program in accordance with policy guidelines es-
19 tablished by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (re-
20 ferred to in this section as the ‘Board’), in consultation
21 with binational Fulbright Commissions, mining industry
22 leaders, institutions of higher education, foreign govern-
23 ments, and United States embassies in eligible countries.

24 “(d) SELECTION OF FELLOWS.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Bureau shall deter-
2 mine the number of fellows selected for the Fellow-
3 ship Program each year. The Board shall select
4 qualified individuals to participate in the Fellowship
5 Program. In selecting the fellows, the Board should
6 ensure geographic representation to ensure region-
7 specific specialties are developed.

8 “(2) CRITERIA.—All fellows shall meet one of
9 the following criteria:

10 “(A) Have a bachelor’s or equivalent de-
11 gree conferred before participating in the Fel-
12 lowship Program.

13 “(B) Be a student who is currently en-
14 rolled in a United States institution of higher
15 education and completing an advanced degree
16 in the field of science, technology, engineering,
17 or mathematics or a field related to the mining
18 industry.

19 “(C) Have had a postdoctoral degree con-
20 ferred during the 5-year period immediately
21 preceding participation in the Fellowship Pro-
22 gram.

23 “(3) REQUIRED INTENT.—Upon completing the
24 Fellowship Program, each fellow shall demonstrate
25 his or her intent to seek employment in a mining

1 profession that directly benefits the growth,
2 progress, and development of the United States min-
3 ing industry—

4 “(A) in the United States Government; or

5 “(B) at a United States-based nongovern-
6 mental organization, academic institution, pri-
7 vate sector company, or other organization that
8 has been approved by the Bureau.

9 “(4) ELIGIBLE UNIVERSITIES.—United States
10 students shall attend universities approved by the
11 Bureau, in consultation with the Committee on For-
12 eign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on
13 Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives,
14 that have a mining education program and are lo-
15 cated in a foreign country. To the extent practicable,
16 the Bureau should prioritize enrollment in higher
17 education mining programs in—

18 “(A) member countries in the Minerals Se-
19 curity Partnership; or

20 “(B) any additional countries identified by
21 the Bureau, in consultation with the congres-
22 sional committees referred to in this paragraph,
23 as containing sufficiently qualified mining pro-
24 grams.

1 “(5) OUTREACH.—To the extent practicable,
 2 the Bureau shall conduct outreach at United States
 3 undergraduate and graduate institutions the Bureau
 4 determines are likely to produce a range of qualified
 5 applicants to be sent abroad.

6 “(e) STRUCTURE.—

7 “(1) WORK PLAN.—To carry out the purposes
 8 described in subsection (b)—

9 “(A) each fellow selected pursuant to sub-
 10 section (d)(1) shall be encouraged to arrange
 11 placement in a mining education program at an
 12 eligible foreign university;

13 “(B) each fellow shall—

14 “(i) participate in advanced
 15 coursework, research projects, and prac-
 16 tical training opportunities, including in-
 17 ternships, offered by the host institution;

18 “(ii) engage with faculty advisors and
 19 industry partners to gain hands-on experi-
 20 ence through internships, laboratory work,
 21 and field studies relevant to the mining in-
 22 dustry;

23 “(iii) serve as a cultural and academic
 24 ambassador of the United States by fos-
 25 tering mutual understanding within the

1 host country’s academic and professional
2 mining community;

3 “(iv) participate in professional devel-
4 opment activities, such as conferences,
5 workshops, and seminars, to expand knowl-
6 edge of global best practices in mining en-
7 gineering and related fields; and

8 “(v) build and strengthen networks
9 with international peers, faculty, and in-
10 dustry professionals to facilitate ongoing
11 collaboration and knowledge exchange; and

12 “(C) the Bureau shall, for each fellow, ap-
13 prove a work plan that identifies the target ob-
14 jectives for the fellow, including specific duties
15 and responsibilities relating to such objectives.

16 “(2) FELLOWSHIP PERIOD.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Each fellowship under
18 this section shall continue for a period deter-
19 mined by the Bureau, which, whenever feasible,
20 shall not be shorter than 1 year.

21 “(B) RENEWAL.—The Bureau may grant
22 a renewal for a second year, in consultation
23 with the relevant United States embassy or
24 Fulbright Commission.

1 “(f) FELLOWSHIP AWARD.—The Bureau shall pro-
2 vide each fellow under this section with an allowance equal
3 to the amount needed for the fellow’s reasonable costs dur-
4 ing the fellowship period, including—

5 “(1) mandatory university fees, including tui-
6 tion, associated with his or her studies;

7 “(2) living expenses, including housing, basic
8 food costs, and daily transportation;

9 “(3) essential textbooks and other academic
10 materials;

11 “(4) mandatory visa application, immigration
12 fees, and other essential pre-departure requirements;

13 “(5) relocation expenses, including travel by air
14 or by rail;

15 “(6) a research allowance, including essential
16 travel to field sites and laboratory work; and

17 “(7) other reasonable costs approved by the Bu-
18 reau.

19 “(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after
20 the completion of the Fellowship Program by the initial
21 cohort of fellows selected pursuant to subsection (d), and
22 annually thereafter, the Secretary of State shall submit
23 a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
24 Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
25 House of Representatives that includes information re-

1 guarding the implementation of the Fellowship Program,
2 including—

3 “(1) the demographics and geographical origins
4 of the cohort of fellows who completed a fellowship
5 during the reporting period;

6 “(2) a description of academic placements se-
7 lected and their relation to the development of the
8 United States region-specific specialties under the
9 Fellowship Program, including participant feedback
10 on program implementation and lessons learned; and

11 “(3) a plan for factoring lessons learned and
12 acquired skills based knowledge into future program-
13 ming.”.

14 **SEC. 5. CRITICAL MINERAL MINING EDUCATIONAL EX-**
15 **CHANGE ACT OF 2025.**

16 The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act
17 of 1961, as amended by sections 3 and 4, is further
18 amended by adding at the end the following:

19 **“SEC. 117. VISITING MINING SCHOLARS PROGRAM.**

20 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is authorized to be es-
21 tablished the Visiting Mining Scholars Program (referred
22 to in this section as the ‘Visiting Scholars Program’) with-
23 in the J. William Fulbright Educational Exchange Pro-
24 gram.

1 “(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Visiting Schol-
 2 ars Program is to bring mining academics and profes-
 3 sionals to the United States—

4 “(1) to build and expand United States mining
 5 education programs at institutions of higher edu-
 6 cation;

7 “(2) to bolster workforce development pro-
 8 grams; and

9 “(3) to advance research and development ini-
 10 tiatives in the mining industry and adjacent fields.

11 “(c) ADMINISTRATION.—The Bureau of Educational
 12 and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State (referred
 13 to in this section as the ‘Bureau’) shall administer the Vis-
 14 iting Scholars Program in accordance with policy guide-
 15 lines established by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship
 16 Board (referred to in this section as the ‘Board’), in con-
 17 sultation with binational Fulbright Commissions, mining
 18 industry leaders, institutions of higher education, foreign
 19 governments, and United States embassies in eligible
 20 countries.

21 “(d) SELECTION OF VISITING MINING SCHOLARS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Board shall select
 23 qualified individuals to participate in the Visiting
 24 Scholars Program, who shall be foreign nationals
 25 who are currently employed—

1 “(A) outside of the United States as min-
2 ing professionals, practitioners, or operators; or

3 “(B) as academics working at institutions
4 of higher education in foreign countries with
5 mining education programs approved by a Ful-
6 bright Commission or United States embassy,
7 in consultation with the Committee on Foreign
8 Relations of the Senate and the Committee on
9 Foreign Affairs of the House of Representa-
10 tives.

11 “(2) NUMBER OF FELLOWS.—The Bureau may
12 determine the number of fellows selected each year,
13 which, whenever feasible, shall not be fewer than 10.

14 “(3) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.—Each visiting
15 mining scholar shall be a foreign national of a coun-
16 try—

17 “(A) in which an existing Fulbright For-
18 eign Student Program operates; and

19 “(B) that has expertise, specialized knowl-
20 edge, or engages in practices that could benefit
21 the United States mining industry.

22 “(4) PREFERRED COUNTRIES.—To the extent
23 practicable, the Bureau shall prioritize the selection
24 of visiting mining scholars who live or work in—

1 “(A) a Member country in the Minerals
2 Security Partnership; or

3 “(B) any additional country identified by
4 the Bureau, in consultation with the Committee
5 on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the
6 Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of
7 Representatives, as containing individuals who
8 have academic expertise, specialized knowledge,
9 or engage in practices that could benefit the
10 United States mining industry.

11 “(5) OUTREACH.—To the extent practicable,
12 the Bureau shall conduct outreach in coordination
13 with appropriate United States embassies, mining
14 industry leaders, and mining institutions abroad that
15 are likely to produce a range of qualified applicants
16 to come to the United States.

17 “(e) STRUCTURE.—

18 “(1) WORK PLAN.—To carry out the purposes
19 described in subsection (b)—

20 “(A) each individual selected pursuant to
21 subsection (d)(1) who is coming to the United
22 States as a visiting mining scholar—

23 “(i) shall arrange placement in a
24 United States academic institution ap-
25 proved by the Bureau; and

1 “(ii) should—

2 “(I) consult with faculty mem-
3 bers to provide technical assistance on
4 how to develop or expand a mining
5 education program at the host institu-
6 tion of higher education;

7 “(II) assist in the development
8 and review of mining education cur-
9 ricula, including course syllabi, labora-
10 tory modules, and fieldwork compo-
11 nents;

12 “(III) participate in collaborative
13 research projects with faculty, stu-
14 dents, and third-party research insti-
15 tutions focusing on innovative mining
16 technologies, sustainable mining prac-
17 tices, and resource management;

18 “(IV) facilitate partnerships be-
19 tween the host institution and mining
20 organizations, government agencies,
21 and other institutions to foster aca-
22 demic exchange, research collabora-
23 tion, and workforce development;

24 “(V) mentor undergraduate and
25 graduate students interested in min-

1 ing education, offering guidance on
2 academic projects and career develop-
3 ment; and

4 “(VI) contribute to the develop-
5 ment of outreach programs aimed at
6 increasing awareness of the mining in-
7 dustry as a career path and to in-
8 crease awareness of the types of min-
9 ing professions available; and

10 “(B) the Bureau shall approve a work plan
11 for each scholar that identifies the target objec-
12 tives for the scholar, including specific duties
13 and responsibilities relating to such objectives.

14 “(2) ELIGIBLE UNITED STATES INSTITU-
15 TIONS.—Visiting mining scholars shall be placed in
16 an institution of higher education approved by the
17 Bureau that—

18 “(A) demonstrates a commitment to devel-
19 oping or expanding academic programs in the
20 mining industry;

21 “(B) possesses existing faculty expertise or
22 research activity in the mining industry or re-
23 lated extractive fields;

24 “(C) provides institutional support and re-
25 sources, such as laboratory facilities, field sites,

1 or equipment, relevant to mining education and
 2 research, including in geology;

3 “(D) demonstrates a commitment to inte-
 4 grate the visiting scholar into curriculum devel-
 5 opment, faculty training, or workforce pipeline
 6 initiatives in mining;

7 “(E) demonstrates a plan for sustaining
 8 mining or critical mineral resources programs
 9 beyond the duration of the visiting scholar’s
 10 placement;

11 “(F) shows evidence of student interest or
 12 regional workforce demand for mining edu-
 13 cation programs or training; and

14 “(G) agrees to provide mentoring, adminis-
 15 trative support, and opportunities for the vis-
 16 iting scholar to engage with students, faculty,
 17 and local industry.

18 “(3) SCHOLARSHIP PERIOD.—

19 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Each scholarship
 20 awarded under this section shall continue for a
 21 period determined by the Bureau, which, when-
 22 ever feasible, shall not be longer than 1 year
 23 and not shorter than 3 months.

24 “(B) EXCEPTIONS.—Any request for an
 25 exception to the duration of the scholarship pe-

1 riod described in subparagraph (A) shall be
2 submitted by the visiting mining scholar and
3 approved by the Bureau before such exception
4 takes effect.

5 “(f) SCHOLARSHIP AWARD.—The Bureau shall pro-
6 vide each visiting mining scholar under this section with
7 an allowance to cover the scholar’s reasonable costs of liv-
8 ing during the scholarship period.

9 “(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after
10 the completion of the Visiting Scholars Program by the
11 initial cohort of scholars selected pursuant to subsection
12 (d)(1), and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State
13 shall submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Rela-
14 tions of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs
15 of the House of Representatives that includes information
16 on the implementation of the Visiting Scholars Program,
17 including—

18 “(1) the demographics and geographical origins
19 of the cohort of scholars who completed a Visiting
20 Scholars Program during the reporting period;

21 “(2) the United States universities at which vis-
22 iting scholars were placed;

23 “(3) the foreign universities or other post-grad-
24 uate institutions from which the cohort of visiting
25 scholars were chosen;

- 1 “(4) a description of academic placements se-
 2 lected under the Visiting Scholars Program, includ-
 3 ing participant feedback on program implementation
 4 and lessons learned; and
- 5 “(5) a plan for factoring lessons learned into
 6 future programming.”.

7 **SEC. 6. TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS TO**
 8 **THE MUTUAL EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL**
 9 **EXCHANGE ACT OF 1961.**

10 The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act
 11 of 1961 (Public Law 87–256; 22 U.S.C. 2451 et seq.) is
 12 amended—

13 (1) in section 104(g) (22 U.S.C. 2454(g)), by
 14 striking paragraph (5);

15 (2) in section 108A(a) (22 U.S.C. 2458a(a))—

16 (A) by striking “(1)” before Congress;

17 (B) by striking paragraph (2); and

18 (C) by redesignating subparagraphs (A),
 19 (B), and (C) as paragraph (1), (2), and (3), re-
 20 spectively;

21 (3) in section 112 (22 U.S.C. 2460)—

22 (A) in subsection (a)—

23 (i) in paragraph (9), by striking
 24 “and” at the end;

1 (ii) in the first paragraph designated
 2 as paragraph (10), by striking the period
 3 at the end and inserting a semicolon;

4 (iii) in the second paragraph des-
 5 ignated as paragraph (10)—

6 (I) by striking “(10)” and insert-
 7 ing “(11)”; and

8 (II) by striking the period at the
 9 end and inserting a semicolon; and

10 (iv) by adding at the end the fol-
 11 lowing:

12 “(12) the Critical Mineral Mining Fellowship
 13 Program established pursuant to section 116, which
 14 provides funding for studies, research, and inter-
 15 national exchange for students seeking to complete
 16 degrees from institutions of higher education in self-
 17 arranged placements with universities with mining
 18 education programs in foreign countries; and

19 “(13) the Visiting Mining Scholars Program es-
 20 tablished pursuant to section 117, which provides
 21 funding for international mining academics, practi-
 22 tioners, professionals and operators in self-arranged
 23 placements with universities in the United States.”;
 24 and

25 (B) in subsection (g)—

- 1 (i) by striking paragraph (2);
- 2 (ii) by redesignating paragraphs (3)
- 3 through (11) as paragraphs (2) through
- 4 (10), respectively; and
- 5 (iii) in paragraph (10), as redesign-
- 6 nated, by striking “paragraph (6)” and in-
- 7 serting “paragraph (5)”; and
- 8 (4) in section 115(d)(2) (22 U.S.C.
- 9 2465(d)(2))—
- 10 (A) by striking subparagraph (B);
- 11 (B) in subparagraph (A)—
- 12 (i) by striking “(A) IN GENERAL.—”;
- 13 and
- 14 (ii) by redesignating clauses (i) and
- 15 (ii) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), and
- 16 moving such clauses 2 ems to the left.

17 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

18 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-
 19 ment of State \$10,000,000 for each of the fiscal years
 20 2026 through 2035 for the purpose of carrying out the
 21 Critical Mineral Mining Fellowship Program and the Vis-
 22 iting Mining Scholars Program established pursuant to
 23 sections 116 and 117 of the Mutual Educational and Cul-
 24 tural Exchange Act of 1961, as added by sections 4 and
 25 5.

1 **SEC. 8. SUNSET.**

2 This Act, and the amendments made by this Act,
3 shall cease to have effect beginning on the date that is
4 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

