

Calendar No. _____

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**S. 1463****[Report No. 119-_____]**

To allow the Secretary of the Interior to enter into memoranda of understanding for the purpose of scientific and technical cooperation in the mapping of critical minerals and rare earth elements, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 10, 2025

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, and Mr. CORNYN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

_____ (legislative day, _____), _____

Reported by Mr. RISCH, with an amendment

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

A BILL

To allow the Secretary of the Interior to enter into memoranda of understanding for the purpose of scientific and technical cooperation in the mapping of critical minerals and rare earth elements, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Finding Opportunities
3 for Resource Exploration Act” or the “Finding ORE Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

5 In this Act:

6 (1) ~~ALLIED FOREIGN COUNTRY.~~—The term “al-
7 lied foreign country” means a country with which
8 the United States has entered into a mutual defense
9 treaty or other mutual defense agreement.

10 (2) ~~CRITICAL MINERAL.~~—The term “critical
11 mineral” has the meaning given the term in section
12 7002(a) of the Energy Act of 2020 (30 U.S.C.
13 1606(a)).

14 (3) ~~INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.~~—The
15 term “institution of higher education” has the
16 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
17 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

18 (4) ~~PARTNER FOREIGN COUNTRY.~~—The term
19 “partner foreign country” means a country that is
20 a source of a critical mineral or rare earth element.

21 (5) ~~RARE EARTH ELEMENT.~~—The term “rare
22 earth element” means cerium, dysprosium, erbium,
23 europium, gadolinium, holmium, lanthanum, lute-
24 tium, neodymium, praseodymium, promethium, sa-
25 marium, scandium, terbium, thulium, ytterbium, or
26 yttrium.

1 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
2 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-
3 rector of the United States Geological Survey.

4 **SEC. 3. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH RE-**
5 **SPECT TO THE MAPPING OF CRITICAL MIN-**
6 **ERALS AND RARE EARTH ELEMENTS.**

7 (a) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.—The Sec-
8 retary may enter into a memorandum of understanding
9 with 1 or more heads of agencies of partner foreign coun-
10 tries with respect to scientific and technical cooperation
11 in the mapping of critical minerals and rare earth ele-
12 ments.

13 (b) OBJECTIVES.—In negotiating a memorandum of
14 understanding under subsection (a), the Secretary shall
15 seek to increase the security and resilience of international
16 supply chains for critical minerals and rare earth elements
17 by—

18 (1) committing to assisting the partner foreign
19 country through cooperative activities described in
20 subsection (c) that help the partner foreign country
21 map reserves of critical minerals and rare earth ele-
22 ments;

23 (2) ensuring that private companies
24 headquartered in the United States or an allied for-
25 eign country are offered the right of first refusal in

1 the further development of critical minerals and rare
2 earth elements in the partner foreign country;

3 ~~(3) facilitating private-sector investment in the~~
4 ~~exploration and development of critical minerals and~~
5 ~~rare earth elements, including by leveraging pref-~~
6 ~~erential financing from entities such as the United~~
7 ~~States International Development Finance Corpora-~~
8 ~~tion and the Export-Import Bank of the United~~
9 ~~States that prioritizes projects committed to proc-~~
10 ~~essing minerals in the United States or an allied for-~~
11 ~~ign country; and~~

12 ~~(4) ensuring that mapping data created through~~
13 ~~the cooperative activities described in subsection (c)~~
14 ~~is protected against unauthorized access by, or dis-~~
15 ~~closure to, governmental or private entities based in~~
16 ~~countries that are not—~~

17 ~~(A) a party to the memorandum of under-~~
18 ~~standing; or~~

19 ~~(B) an allied foreign country.~~

20 ~~(c) COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES.—The cooperative ac-~~
21 ~~tivities referred to in subsection (b) include—~~

22 ~~(1) acquisition, compilation, analysis, and inter-~~
23 ~~pretation of geologic, geophysical, geochemical, and~~
24 ~~spectroscopic remote sensing data;~~

1 (2) prospectivity mapping and mineral resource
2 assessment;

3 (3) analysis of geoscience data, including devel-
4 oping derivative map products that can help more
5 effectively evaluate the mineral resources of the
6 partner foreign country;

7 (4) scientific collaboration to enhance the un-
8 derstanding and management of the natural re-
9 sources of the partner foreign country to contribute
10 to the sustainable development of the mineral re-
11 sources sector of that partner foreign country;

12 (5) training and capacity building in each area
13 described in paragraphs (1) through (4);

14 (6) facilitation of education and specialized
15 training in geoscience and mineral resource manage-
16 ment at institutions of higher education;

17 (7) training in relevant international standards
18 for relevant officials of the government and private
19 companies of the partner foreign country; and

20 (8) cooperation among entities of the partner
21 foreign country that are a party to the memorandum
22 of understanding and entities in the United States,
23 including Federal departments and agencies, institu-
24 tions of higher education, research centers, and pri-
25 vate companies.

1 (d) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary
2 shall notify Congress not later than 30 days before the
3 Secretary intends to enter into a memorandum of under-
4 standing under subsection (a).

5 (e) COLLABORATION WITH SECRETARY OF STATE.—
6 The Secretary shall collaborate with the Secretary of State
7 in—

8 (1) prioritizing and selecting partner foreign
9 countries with which to enter into a memorandum of
10 understanding under subsection (a);

11 (2) negotiating a memorandum of under-
12 standing under subsection (a); and

13 (3) implementing a memorandum of under-
14 standing entered into under subsection (a).

15 (f) CONSULTATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR.—The
16 Secretary shall consult with relevant private sector actors,
17 as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, in—

18 (1) prioritizing and selecting partner foreign
19 countries with which to enter into a memorandum of
20 understanding under subsection (a); and

21 (2) assessing how a memorandum of under-
22 standing can best facilitate private sector interest in
23 pursuing the further development of critical minerals
24 and rare earth elements in accordance with the ob-
25 jectives described in subsection (b).

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 *This Act may be cited as the “Finding Opportunities*
3 *for Resource Exploration Act” or the “Finding ORE Act”.*

4 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

5 *It is the sense of Congress that the United States should*
6 *prioritize, to the greatest extent practicable, the onshoring*
7 *of critical mineral processing.*

8 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

9 *In this Act:*

10 (1) **ALLIED FOREIGN COUNTRY.**—*The term “al-*
11 *lied foreign country” means a member country of the*
12 *North Atlantic Treaty Organization or a country that*
13 *has been designated as a major non-NATO ally under*
14 *section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22*
15 *U.S.C. 2321k).*

16 (2) **CRITICAL MINERAL.**—*The term “critical*
17 *mineral” has the meaning given the term in section*
18 *7002(a) of the Energy Act of 2020 (30 U.S.C.*
19 *1606(a)).*

20 (3) **INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**—*The*
21 *term “institution of higher education” has the mean-*
22 *ing given the term in section 101 of the Higher Edu-*
23 *cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).*

24 (4) **PARTNER FOREIGN COUNTRY.**—*The term*
25 *“partner foreign country” means a country that is a*
26 *source of a critical mineral or rare earth element.*

1 (5) *RARE EARTH ELEMENT.*—*The term “rare*
2 *earth element” means cerium, dysprosium, erbium,*
3 *europium, gadolinium, holmium, lanthanum, lute-*
4 *tium, neodymium, praseodymium, promethium, sa-*
5 *marium, scandium, terbium, thulium, ytterbium, or*
6 *yttrium.*

7 (6) *SECRETARY.*—*The term “Secretary” means*
8 *the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-*
9 *rector of the United States Geological Survey.*

10 **SEC. 4. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH RESPECT**
11 **TO THE MAPPING OF CRITICAL MINERALS**
12 **AND RARE EARTH ELEMENTS.**

13 (a) *MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.*—*The Sec-*
14 *retary may enter into a memorandum of understanding*
15 *with 1 or more heads of agencies of partner foreign coun-*
16 *tries with respect to scientific and technical cooperation in*
17 *the mapping of critical minerals and rare earth elements.*

18 (b) *OBJECTIVES.*—*In negotiating a memorandum of*
19 *understanding under subsection (a), the Secretary shall seek*
20 *to increase the security and resilience of international sup-*
21 *ply chains for critical minerals and rare earth elements*
22 *by—*

23 (1) *committing to assisting the partner foreign*
24 *country through cooperative activities described in*
25 *subsection (c) that help the partner foreign country*

1 *map reserves of critical minerals and rare earth ele-*
2 *ments;*

3 (2) *ensuring that private companies*
4 *headquartered in the United States or an allied for-*
5 *ign country are offered the right of first refusal in*
6 *the further development of critical minerals and rare*
7 *earth elements in the partner foreign country;*

8 (3) *facilitating private-sector investment in the*
9 *exploration and development of critical minerals and*
10 *rare earth elements; and*

11 (4) *ensuring that mapping data created through*
12 *the cooperative activities described in subsection (c) is*
13 *protected against unauthorized access by, or disclo-*
14 *sure to, governmental or private entities based in*
15 *countries that are not—*

16 (A) *a party to the memorandum of under-*
17 *standing; or*

18 (B) *an allied foreign country.*

19 (c) *COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES.—The cooperative ac-*
20 *tivities referred to in subsection (b) include—*

21 (1) *acquisition, compilation, analysis, and inter-*
22 *pretation of geologic, geophysical, geochemical, and*
23 *spectroscopic remote sensing data;*

24 (2) *prospectivity mapping and mineral resource*
25 *assessment;*

1 (3) *analysis of geoscience data, including devel-*
2 *oping derivative map products that can help more ef-*
3 *fectively evaluate the mineral resources of the partner*
4 *foreign country;*

5 (4) *scientific collaboration to enhance the under-*
6 *standing and management of the natural resources of*
7 *the partner foreign country to contribute to the sus-*
8 *tainable development of the mineral resources sector of*
9 *that partner foreign country;*

10 (5) *training and capacity building in each area*
11 *described in paragraphs (1) through (4);*

12 (6) *facilitation of education and specialized*
13 *training in geoscience and mineral resource manage-*
14 *ment at institutions of higher education;*

15 (7) *training in relevant international standards*
16 *for relevant officials of the government and private*
17 *companies of the partner foreign country; and*

18 (8) *cooperation among entities of the partner for-*
19 *oreign country that are a party to the memorandum of*
20 *understanding and entities in the United States, in-*
21 *cluding Federal departments and agencies, institu-*
22 *tions of higher education, research centers, and pri-*
23 *vate companies.*

24 (d) *NOTIFICATION AND REPORT TO CONGRESS.—*

1 (1) *DEFINITION OF APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES*
2 *OF CONGRESS.—In this subsection, the term “appro-*
3 *priate committees of Congress” means—*

4 (A) *the Committees on Energy and Natural*
5 *Resources, Foreign Relations, and Appropria-*
6 *tions of the Senate; and*

7 (B) *the Committees on Natural Resources,*
8 *Foreign Affairs, and Appropriations of the*
9 *House of Representatives.*

10 (2) *NOTIFICATION AND REPORT.—Not later than*
11 *30 days before the Secretary intends to enter into a*
12 *memorandum of understanding under subsection (a),*
13 *the Secretary shall—*

14 (A) *notify the appropriate committees of*
15 *Congress; and*

16 (B) *submit to the appropriate committees of*
17 *Congress a report detailing the implementing*
18 *partners, scope of the memorandum of under-*
19 *standing, activities to be undertaken, estimated*
20 *costs, and source of funding.*

21 (e) *CONCURRENCE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.—*
22 *The Secretary shall obtain the concurrence of the Secretary*
23 *of State in—*

1 (1) *prioritizing and selecting partner foreign*
2 *countries with which to enter into a memorandum of*
3 *understanding under subsection (a);*

4 (2) *negotiating a memorandum of understanding*
5 *under subsection (a);*

6 (3) *implementing a memorandum of under-*
7 *standing entered into under subsection (a), including*
8 *through the use of funds made available to the Sec-*
9 *retary of State; and*

10 (4) *carrying out subsection (d).*

11 (f) *CONSULTATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR.—The Sec-*
12 *retary shall consult with relevant private sector actors, as*
13 *the Secretary determines to be appropriate, in—*

14 (1) *prioritizing and selecting partner foreign*
15 *countries with which to enter into a memorandum of*
16 *understanding under subsection (a); and*

17 (2) *assessing how a memorandum of under-*
18 *standing can best facilitate private sector interest in*
19 *pursuing the further development of critical minerals*
20 *and rare earth elements in accordance with the objec-*
21 *tives described in subsection (b).*

22 **SEC. 5. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

23 *Nothing in this Act impedes or otherwise alters any*
24 *authority of the Director of the United States Geological*
25 *Survey provided by—*

- 1 (1) *the matter under the heading “GEOLOGI-*
2 *CAL SURVEY” of the first section of the Act of*
3 *March 3, 1879 (43 U.S.C. 31(a)); or*
4 (2) *the first section of Public Law 87–626 (43*
5 *U.S.C. 31(b)).*