

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 261
OFFERED BY MR. WESTERMAN OF ARKANSAS

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Undersea Cable Pro-
3 tection Act of 2025”.

4 SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING
5 PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR,
6 UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHOR-
7 IZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.

8 The National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C.
9 1431 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 310
10 the following:

11 “SEC. 310A. PROHIBITION ON PROHIBITING, OR REQUIRING
12 PERMITS OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS FOR,
13 UNDERSEA FIBER OPTIC CABLES AUTHOR-
14 IZED BY A FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCY.

15 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other pro-
16 vision of this Act, the Secretary may not prohibit, or re-
17 quire any permit, including any special use permit, or
18 other authorization for, the installation, continued pres-

1 ence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of under-
2 sea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if
3 a license, lease, or permit has been issued by a Federal
4 or State agency, and is in effect, authorizing such installa-
5 tion, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair,
6 or recovery.

7 “(b) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.—Nothing in this
8 section shall be construed as altering existing require-
9 ments regarding interagency cooperation under section
10 304(d) in any Federal agency action described in that sec-
11 tion and involving the installation, continued presence, op-
12 eration, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber
13 optic cables in a national marine sanctuary.”.

14 **SEC. 3. REMOVING RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVITIES COV-**
15 **ERED BY SANCTUARY SPECIAL USE PERMITS.**

16 Subsection 310(c) of National Marine Sanctuaries
17 Act (16 U.S.C. 1441(c)) is amended—

18 (1) in paragraph (1), by adding “and” at the
19 end;

20 (2) by striking paragraphs (2) and (3); and

21 (3) by redesignating paragraph (4) as para-
22 graph (2).

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to prohibit the Secretary of Commerce from prohibiting, or requiring any permit or other authorization for, the installation, continued presence, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if such activities have been authorized by a Federal or State agency.”.

