117TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

H. R. 1083

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 15, 2021

Mrs. Wagner (for herself and Mr. Castro of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Southeast Asia Strategy Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Southeast Asia is the fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific region, providing both a geographic and maritime link between East and South Asia.
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional intergovernmental organization, remains central to the Indo-Pacific region’s institutional architecture and to United States foreign policy toward the region.

The United States has reaffirmed that the security and sovereignty of its Southeast Asian allies and partners, including a strong, independent ASEAN, remain vital to the prosperity and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

The United States has committed to deepen longstanding alliances and partnerships with a range of Southeast Asian nations, including by promoting our shared values, democracy, human rights, and civil society.

Since the end of the Second World War, United States investments in strengthening alliances and partnerships with Southeast Asian nations have yielded tremendous returns for United States interests, as working with and through these alliances and partnerships have increased the region’s ability to address common challenges.

ASEAN member states are critical United States security partners in protecting the freedom and openness of the maritime domain and pre-
venting violent extremism and the trafficking of
weapons of mass destruction.

(7) ASEAN member states have contributed
significantly to regional disaster monitoring and
management and emergency response through initia-
tives such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for
Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management,
an inter-governmental organization that facilitates
coordination and cooperation among ASEAN mem-
ber states and international organizations in times
of emergency.

(8) According to the 2018 ASEAN Business
Outlook Survey, ASEAN member states are vital to
the prosperity of the United States economy and ex-
ports to ASEAN economies support more than
500,000 jobs in the United States.

(9) The United States and ASEAN have estab-
lished a new strategic partnership that will enhance
cooperation across the economic, political-security,
and people-to-people pillars of the relationship.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to—

(1) deepen cooperation with ASEAN and
ASEAN member states in the interest of promoting
peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region;

(2) affirm the importance of ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving institutional architecture of the Indo-Pacific region; and

(3) establish and communicate a comprehensive strategy toward the Indo-Pacific region that articulates—

(A) the role and importance of Southeast Asia to the United States;

(B) the value of the United States-ASEAN relationship;

(C) the mutual interests of all parties;

(D) the concrete and material benefits all nations derive from strong United States engagement and leadership in Southeast Asia; and

(E) efforts to forge and maintain ASEAN consensus, especially on key issues of political and security concern to the region, such as the South China Sea.

SEC. 4. STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ASEAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the heads of other Federal depart-
ments and agencies as appropriate, shall develop and sub-
mit to the appropriate congressional committees a com-
prehensive strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia
and ASEAN.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy re-
quired by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A statement of enduring United States in-
terests in Southeast Asia and a description of efforts
to bolster the effectiveness of ASEAN.

(2) A description of efforts to—

(A) deepen and expand Southeast Asian al-
liances, partnerships, and multilateral engage-
ments, including efforts to expand broad based
and inclusive economic growth, security ties, se-
curity cooperation and interoperability, eco-
nomic connectivity, and expand opportunities
for ASEAN to work with other like-minded
partners in the region; and

(B) encourage like-minded partners outside
of the Indo-Pacific region to engage with
ASEAN.

(3) A summary of initiatives across the whole
of the United States Government to strengthen the
United States partnership with Southeast Asian na-
tions and ASEAN, including to promote broad based
and inclusive economic growth, trade, investment, energy innovation and sustainability, public-private partnerships, physical and digital infrastructure development, education, disaster management, public health and global health security, and economic, political, and public diplomacy in Southeast Asia.

(4) A summary of initiatives across the whole of the United States Government to enhance the capacity of Southeast Asian nations with respect to enforcing international law and multilateral sanctions, and initiatives to cooperate with ASEAN as an institution in these areas.

(5) A summary of initiatives across the whole of the United States Government to promote human rights and democracy, to strengthen the rule of law, civil society, and transparent governance, to combat disinformation and to protect the integrity of elections from outside influence.

(6) A summary of initiatives to promote security cooperation and security assistance within Southeast Asian nations, including—

(A) maritime security and maritime domain awareness initiatives for protecting the maritime commons and supporting international
law and freedom of navigation in the South
China Sea; and

(B) efforts to combat terrorism, human
trafficking, piracy, and illegal fishing, and pro-
mote more open, reliable routes for sea lines of
communication.

(e) DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGY.—For the purposes
of assuring allies and partners in Southeast Asia and
deepening United States engagement with ASEAN, the
Secretary of State shall direct each United States chief
of mission to ASEAN and its member states to distribute
the strategy required by subsection (a) to host govern-
ments.

(d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
gressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
Committee on Armed Services of the House of Rep-
resentatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.