

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To establish the Coastal Management Fellowship and the Digital Coast Fellowship, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Ms. COLLINS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish the Coastal Management Fellowship and the Digital Coast Fellowship, 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 “Coastal Fellowships
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) COASTAL STATE.—The term “coastal
9 State”—

1 (A) means a State of the United States in,
2 or bordering on, the Atlantic, Pacific, or Arctic
3 Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, the Long Island
4 Sound, or one or more of the Great Lakes; and

5 (B) includes Puerto Rico, the United
6 States Virgin Islands, Guam, the Common-
7 wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and
8 American Samoa.

9 (2) FELLOW.—The term “fellow” means an in-
10 dividual awarded a fellowship under section 5.

11 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
12 the Secretary of Commerce.

13 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF COASTAL MANAGEMENT FEL-**
14 **LOWSHIP.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a fellowship
16 program, to be known as the “Coastal Management Fel-
17 lowship”.

18 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Coastal Man-
19 agement Fellowship are—

20 (1) to provide on-the-job training, professional
21 mentoring, and educational opportunities in coastal
22 management and policy to qualified individuals as
23 described in section 5;

24 (2) to direct essential workforce assistance to
25 coastal States to support coastal management ef-

1 forts, including building local-level capacity to adapt
2 to coastal vulnerabilities; and

3 (3) to encourage the next generation of coastal
4 professionals to engage in public service work to help
5 the United States better manage coastal resources
6 and protect coastal communities.

7 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF DIGITAL COAST FELLOWSHIP.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a fellowship
9 program, to be known as the “Digital Coast Fellowship”.

10 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Digital Coast
11 Fellowship are—

12 (1) to provide on-the-job training, professional
13 mentoring, and educational opportunities in coastal
14 management and policy to qualified individuals as
15 described in section 5;

16 (2) to provide assistance to coastal States and
17 partner organizations to help advance the goals of
18 the Digital Coast program established under section
19 4 of the Digital Coast Act (16 U.S.C. 1467); and

20 (3) to encourage the next generation of coastal
21 professionals to engage in public service work to help
22 the United States better manage coastal resources
23 and protect coastal communities.

1 **SEC. 5. FELLOWSHIPS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award fellow-
3 ships under the Coastal Management Fellowship and the
4 Digital Coast Fellowship in accordance with this section.

5 (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
7 fellowships under this section to individuals selected
8 from among individuals who—

9 (A) have successfully completed a covered
10 degree or will complete a covered degree before
11 the start of the fellowship; and

12 (B) have demonstrated—

13 (i) an interest in pursuing a career in
14 coastal or marine—

15 (I) science;

16 (II) policy;

17 (III) management; or

18 (IV) law;

19 (ii) outstanding potential for such a
20 career;

21 (iii) leadership potential or experience;

22 (iv) a commitment to or significant in-
23 terest in public service;

24 (v) proficient skills in writing and oral
25 communication; and

1 (vi) such other attributes as the Sec-
2 retary determines appropriate.

3 (2) DEFINITION OF COVERED DEGREE.—In this
4 subsection, the term “covered degree” means a grad-
5 uate degree from an accredited United States insti-
6 tution, the curriculum for which covers topics rel-
7 evant to coastal management, as determined by the
8 Secretary.

9 (c) REQUIREMENT OF GEOGRAPHIC BALANCE.—The
10 Secretary shall award fellowships under this section in a
11 manner that is geographically balanced.

12 (d) TERM OF FELLOWSHIP.—A fellowship awarded
13 under this section shall be for a term of not more than
14 2 years.

15 (e) STIPEND.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each fellow shall receive an
17 annual stipend of not less than \$47,000, which the
18 Secretary shall regularly review and periodically ad-
19 just, as determined appropriate by the Secretary—

20 (A) to be commensurate with other similar
21 fellowships; and

22 (B) to account for changes in cost of living
23 and inflation.

24 (2) LOCALITY PAY.—The Secretary shall in-
25 clude a pay adjustment as part of the stipends de-

1 scribed in paragraph (1) that is comparable to the
2 locality pay adjustment for the locality pay area in
3 which the host office of the fellow is located, as de-
4 termined under section 531.603 of title 5, Code of
5 Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation).

6 (f) STATUS OF FELLOWS.—Except as provided in
7 subsection (h)(3), fellows shall not be considered to be
8 Federal employees.

9 (g) DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—During fiscal year 2023 and
11 any fiscal year thereafter, the head of any Federal
12 agency may appoint, without regard to the provi-
13 sions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5, United
14 States Code, other than sections 3303 and 3328 of
15 that title, a candidate who meets the qualifications
16 described in paragraph (2) directly to a position with
17 the Federal agency for which the candidate meets
18 Office of Personnel Management qualification stand-
19 ards.

20 (2) QUALIFICATIONS.—Paragraph (1) applies
21 with respect to a former fellow who has successfully
22 fulfilled the requirements of the fellowship.

23 (3) LIMITATION.—The direct hire authority
24 under paragraph (1) shall be exercised with respect
25 to a specific qualified candidate not later than 2

1 years after the date on which the candidate com-
2 pleted a fellowship awarded under this section.

3 (h) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts authorized to be ap-
4 propriated under section 6 shall be used for—

5 (1) the award of fellowships under this section,
6 including stipends paid to fellows and other relevant
7 benefits offered to fellows, including health insur-
8 ance, as identified by the Secretary;

9 (2) administrative costs associated with the
10 Coastal Management Fellowship and the Digital
11 Coast Fellowship;

12 (3) relocation and travel expenses paid to fel-
13 lows, who shall be considered to be Federal employ-
14 ees for purposes of section 3375 of title 5, United
15 States Code;

16 (4) professional development opportunities for
17 fellows, including costs associated with trainings,
18 certifications, classes, or other opportunities to ad-
19 vance—

20 (A) the professional skills of each fellow; or

21 (B) the ability of each fellow to support
22 the needs of the host office; and

23 (5) such other costs of the Coastal Management
24 Fellowship and the Digital Coast Fellowship as the
25 Secretary may identify.

1 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
3 retary for the uses described in section 5(h) \$1,910,000
4 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.