

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Reintroduces DiasporaLink Act to Establish Trans-Atlantic Fiber Optic Cable

The bill aims to assess the feasibility and cost of constructing a submarine fiber optic cable linking the U.S., via the U.S. Virgin Islands, to Nigeria and Ghana. Supporters say the initiative will enhance U.S. national security and digital commerce.

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett.

V.I. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has reintroduced the DiasporaLink Act, a measure aimed at assessing the feasibility, cost, and value of constructing a Trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the United States, via the U.S. Virgin

Islands, to Nigeria and Ghana. Proponents say the legislation, co-sponsored by Congressman Russ Fulcher (R-ID-1), seeks to bolster America's national security, digital commerce, and international connectivity.

According to the release, the DiasporaLink Act is envisioned as both an economic driver and a national security tool, providing high-speed internet connectivity to Africa and the Caribbean from American soil. Plaskett said the bill aims to reinforce the U.S.'s global, political, economic, and military standing while addressing regional security concerns, including political instability and transnational crime.

"This bill represents an opportunity to establish high-speed internet connections to Africa and the Caribbean while safeguarding America's national security interests," said Plaskett. "The U.S. Virgin Islands will serve as a pivotal hub for this project, ensuring our region remains at the forefront of digital innovation."

She extended her gratitude to Congressman Fulcher, Energy & Commerce Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and Energy & Commerce Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY) for their support. Plaskett also reaffirmed her commitment to advancing the bill through the House and Senate, with the goal of securing full congressional approval.

Currently, there is no direct fiber optic link between the United States and Africa, according to the bill's sponsors. As Africa emerges as a dynamic economic region, the U.S. must expand its technological infrastructure to facilitate business, communication, and security operations, they argue. The U.S. Virgin Islands, strategically positioned in Caribbean transit zones, plays a vital role in combatting transnational crime and ensuring regional security.

The proposed fiber optic cable network, with a hub in the U.S. Virgin Islands, would create a "Digital Safe Harbor" under the U.S. flag, according the release. This project is expected to provide African and Caribbean internet service providers (ISPs) with direct access to U.S. financial and business centers, boosting global commerce and technology development.

Additionally, undersea fiber optic cables are critical infrastructure, as approximately 98% of international internet and telephone traffic is carried through an estimated 400 undersea cables. Many of these are owned and operated by U.S. companies, reinforcing the nation's dominance in internet communications while safeguarding data from potential sabotage or surveillance.

Plaskett noted that establishing the DiasporaLink fiber optic hub in the U.S. Virgin Islands would create new economic opportunities. The initiative could stimulate high-tech job growth, attract digital enterprises, and position the territory as a leader in the global digital economy.

The DiasporaLink Act previously passed the House Energy & Commerce Committee with unanimous support, and later gained approval in the House of Representatives before being sent to the Senate during the 118th Congress. With its reintroduction, Plaskett and her colleagues are hopeful that the bill will receive full congressional passage.