



Frequently Asked Questions - Drone Legislation

What are drones?

Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, are aircraft without a human pilot aboard. Its flight is controlled either autonomously by onboard computers or by the remote control of a pilot on the ground. Model aircraft are technically considered UAS.

What are drones used for?

Drones are frequently known for their two main military purposes – those used for reconnaissance and surveillance and those that are armed with missiles and bombs. However, the use of small drones is becoming more main-stream for non-military purposes. Some non-military applications of drones equipped with video or photography capabilities include journalism, amateur and professional photography, agricultural surveys, real estate, remote area security, and local law enforcement (with possibilities for assistance in drug busts, hostage situations, fire and other rescue operations, and more).

What is the state proposing?

The proposed legislation would:

1. Legally define what constitutes as an unmanned aircraft.
2. Establish the crime of “criminal use of an unmanned aircraft”
3. Set up standards for the use of unmanned aircraft by law enforcement agencies.

Why is this legislation necessary?

As drone use becomes more common, the FAA plans to release new regulations next year for the commercial use of drones in the National Airspace (400 feet and above), and later for the use of small drones below the National Airspace. Connecticut should already have a legal framework in place when the new regulations become law.

While drones can have many practical uses in both the private and public sector, privacy should be our number one concern. That is why the proposed bill establishes the crime of “criminal use of an unmanned aircraft” for criminal activity like stalking and voyeurism.

Law enforcement agencies are currently debating when and how to employ drone technology. This new law would make sure law enforcement agencies are allowed to use drones to their full potential while still keeping the lives of Connecticut’s residents safe and private by requiring a warrant to use a drone to gather information about a specific individual.

Are there federal laws already in place?

The FAA has guidelines in place and hopes to issue concrete regulations in September 2015 and beyond.

I like to fly remote control planes how does this law affect me as a hobbyist?

Current rules allow radio-control hobbyists to fly their aircraft within sight and under 400 feet. This bill would not affect your ability to fly a remote aircraft in a legal manner.

What is the penalty for violating the law?

Conviction of a crime with a drone equipped with weapons would be considered a class B felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Conviction of a crime such as stalking or voyeurism with a drone would be considered a class C felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

I have further questions.

Contact Representative James Albis directly at James.Albis@cga.ct.gov.