

SS SB 1421 -- UNLAWFUL USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT IN CERTAIN AREAS

SPONSOR: Schroer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 8 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 9 to 1.

This bill modifies provisions relating to the unlawful use of unmanned aircraft in certain areas. Under current law, it is a criminal offense to operate an unmanned aircraft over an open-air facility. This bill modifies this offense by also making it unlawful to operate or use an unmanned aircraft within the boundary of any critical infrastructure facility, as defined in the bill, or within a vertical distance of 400 feet from the ground and within the boundary of such facility. The bill provides certain exceptions to the prohibition of the operation of an unmanned aircraft.

The definition of "open-air facility", as used in this provision, is modified by decreasing the requisite capacity from 5,000 or more people to 500 or more people.

Under current law, any delivery of a gun, knife, weapon, or other article by an unmanned aircraft over an open-air facility will be punished as a class B felony. This bill adds delivery of any explosive device or material, and adds critical infrastructure as a location where such deliveries are prohibited.

Law enforcement officers are authorized to take necessary mitigation measures, as described in the bill, against an imminent threat posed by an unmanned aircraft system to public safety. This bill provides that any unmanned aircraft seized pursuant to this bill will be subject to forfeiture under the criminal activity forfeiture act.

This bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that these types of aircraft pose a threat to the public because of the many risks that are involved in the operation of unmanned aircraft. Supporters further state that law enforcement needs all of the tools it can use to protect citizens from improper usage of unmanned aircraft over critical infrastructure. Supporters also state that this bill does not hinder the use of things like drones performing otherwise lawful activity.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Schroer; City of Kansas City; Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Jayln Talbot, Missouri Department of Public Safety; and Arnie Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.