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Final Analysis

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Primary Sponsor: Rep. Willis

Effective date:*

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SUMMARY

Use of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)

Private use prohibitions

- Prohibits a person from operating a UAV as follows:
 - In a manner that knowingly endangers any person or property, or purposely disregards others' rights or safety;
 - If federal law or regulations prohibit its operation, unless the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has authorized the person to use the UAV;
 - In a manner that disrupts, interrupts, or impairs the operations or activities of law enforcement, fire departments, or emergency medical services; and
 - To photograph, record, or loiter over or near a critical facility with purpose to further another criminal offense that involves physical harm to another person or with purpose to destroy or tamper with the critical facility.

Local government use and regulation

- Subject to other federal and state laws regarding UAVs, authorizes a municipal corporation, township, park district, or county to adopt ordinances, resolutions, or regulations regarding both:
 - The use and operation of UAVs owned and operated by the local government; and

* The Legislative Service Commission had not received formal notification of the effective date at the time this analysis was prepared. Additionally, the analysis may not reflect action taken by the Governor.

- The use and operation of UAVs operated exclusively as a hobby or for recreational purposes in and above a park or other public property owned by the local government.

Office of Aviation responsibilities

- Requires the Office of Aviation to provide information and resources on the Office's website regarding the use of UAVs and regarding what constitutes a critical facility.

Abandoned and derelict aircraft

- Authorizes a person to recoup unpaid storage costs from an aircraft owner by perfecting a lien on the aircraft.
- Establishes specific notification procedures that apply before the director of a public-use airport may perfect a lien on an abandoned aircraft for storage costs and for labor on or furnishing materials for the abandoned aircraft.
- Establishes a process to dispose of a derelict aircraft located on a public-use airport's property through either public auction or through an aircraft salvage or scrap metal dealer.
- Specifies that the derelict aircraft owner remains liable for any remaining costs, fees, and charges if the price of the aircraft does not cover the amount owed to the airport.
- Establishes a procedure for any excess proceeds from the disposal of a derelict aircraft to be distributed to other lienholders, the owner of the aircraft, or the Unclaimed Funds Trust Fund, as circumstances warrant.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Use of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)

An unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV (commonly known as a drone), is a powered, aerial vehicle to which all of the following apply:

- It does not carry a human operator and is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention either within or on the vehicle;
- It uses aerodynamic forces to provide lift;
- It can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely; and
- It is either expendable or recoverable.¹

The use of UAVs and UAV systems, both for private and commercial use, has increased exponentially in recent years.² While federal laws, enforced by the Federal Aviation

¹ R.C. 4561.50(B).

² A UAV system includes the communication links and components that control the UAV and that are required for the remote pilot in command to operate the vehicle. R.C. 4561.50(C).

Administration (FAA), regulate the operational safety and licensing requirements for UAVs, state and local laws may regulate and control the locations to launch and land UAVs and other issues, such as privacy concerns.³ The act creates statewide regulations related to these issues for Ohio.

Private use prohibitions

The act creates several prohibitions related to private use of a UAV. The prohibitions and related information regarding exceptions and penalties are in the following table.

Private use of UAV prohibitions		
Prohibition	Exception	Penalty
Operating a UAV in a manner that knowingly endangers any person or property or that purposely disregards others' rights or safety. ⁴	None.	Up to \$500 fine; and/or Up to six months imprisonment. ⁵
Operating a UAV if federal law or federal regulations (including FAA regulations) prohibit that operation. ⁶	This prohibition does not apply if the FAA expressly authorizes a person to operate the UAV in a manner that is otherwise contrary to the general law or regulations. However, the person must abide by the FAA's terms of the authorization. ⁷	Subject to federal penalties imposed for the specific offense. ⁸
Operating a UAV in a manner that disrupts, interrupts, or impairs the operations or activities conducted by law enforcement personnel, fire department personnel, or emergency medical services personnel, while the personnel is on duty. ⁹	None.	If committed recklessly: fourth degree misdemeanor; If committed knowingly: first degree misdemeanor on the first offense and fifth degree felony on subsequent offenses. ¹⁰

³ 49 United States Code 40103.

⁴ R.C. 4561.15(A)(5).

⁵ R.C. 4561.15(C).

⁶ R.C. 4561.51(A)(1).

⁷ R.C. 4561.51(A)(2).

⁸ R.C. 4561.51(A).

⁹ R.C. 4561.51(B).

¹⁰ R.C. 4561.51(D)(1).

Private use of UAV prohibitions		
Prohibition	Exception	Penalty
Purposely operating a UAV or UAV system to photograph, record, or loiter over or near a critical facility* with purpose to further another criminal offense, the elements of which involve causing physical harm to another person or causing another person to believe that the offender will physically harm them. ¹¹	None.	First degree misdemeanor on the first offense and a fifth degree felony on subsequent offenses. ¹²
Purposely operating a UAV or UAV system to photograph, record, or loiter over or near a critical facility* with purpose to destroy or tamper with the facility. ¹³	None.	Third degree felony. ¹⁴

* For purposes of the act, a “critical facility” means a critical infrastructure facility (e.g., major utilities, railroads, radio/tv transmission facilities, etc.), a commercial distribution center, a courthouse, a police station, a sheriff’s office, an Ohio State Highway Patrol station, premises controlled by the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, a jail or prison, a military installation or facility, or a hospital that receives air ambulance services.¹⁵

Local government use and regulation

The act authorizes local governments (a municipal corporation, township, park district, or county), subject to federal and state laws and regulations, to adopt ordinances, resolutions, or regulations regarding both of the following:

- The use and operation of a UAV owned and operated by the local government; and
- The private use and operation of a UAV when a person operates the UAV exclusively as a hobby or for recreational purposes in or above a park or other public property owned by the local government.¹⁶

¹¹ R.C. 4561.51(C)(1).

¹² R.C. 4561.51(D)(1).

¹³ R.C. 4561.51(C)(2).

¹⁴ R.C. 4561.51(D)(2).

¹⁵ R.C. 4561.50(A); R.C. 2911.21, not in the act.

¹⁶ R.C. 4561.52.

Office of Aviation responsibilities

The act requires the Office of Aviation, within the Department of Transportation, to provide information and resources on the Office's website regarding the laws, regulations, and proper use of UAVs and UAV systems. The information must pertain to all uses of a UAV, including public, commercial, and recreational use. Additionally, the Office must provide picture examples of critical facilities to help guide UAV users. Any picture examples or written descriptions, however, cannot identify the owner, operator, or location of the critical facility.¹⁷

Abandoned and derelict aircraft

Under the act, an abandoned aircraft is one located on the premises of a public-use airport when the owner or operator of the aircraft has not paid any tie-down, hangar, rent, or storage costs for use of the premises for at least 90 consecutive days. A public-use airport is an airport available for use by the general public without the prior approval of the owner or operator, except as federal laws or regulations require.¹⁸ A derelict aircraft, in contrast, is one that meets all of the following:

1. It is located on the premises of a public-use airport.
2. It is not in a flyable condition.
3. It does not comply with the FAA regulations that would allow it to be operated or flown.
4. It does not have a written repair plan that is approved and signed by either an FAA certified airframe and power plant mechanic or a person otherwise authorized to perform maintenance on the aircraft, in accordance with FAA regulations.
5. The owner or operator of the aircraft has not paid any tie-down, hangar, rent, or storage costs for use of the premises for at least 90 consecutive days.¹⁹

An abandoned aircraft might also be a derelict aircraft, if it meets the additional conditions related to derelict aircraft.

Storage liens

Prior to the act, the process for placing a lien on an aircraft applied only to costs for labor performed on, and materials furnished for, an aircraft. The act, however, applies that process to costs incurred for the storage of an aircraft as well. The process establishes procedures for perfecting the lien, which include the following:

- Filing an affidavit with the FAA to perfect the lien;
- Specifications for what must be included in the affidavit, such as the amount owed to the lien claimant and a description of the aircraft;
- A 90-day period in which to file the affidavit;

¹⁷ R.C. 4561.53.

¹⁸ R.C. 1311.71; R.C. 4563.30, not in the act.

¹⁹ R.C. 4561.26(A)(1).

- Serving a copy of the affidavit on the owner;
- Lien priority processes;
- Enforcement of the lien through the court with jurisdiction in the county in which either the storage took place or in which the public-use airport's primary place of business is located (when in Ohio);
- Processes for an aircraft owner to take to release the lien or commence a suit on the lien; and
- Processes for the lien claimant (the airport) to maintain the lien (a lien otherwise lasts six years, unless released sooner) and the awarding of attorney's fees.²⁰

Additional procedures for abandoned aircraft

The act establishes a notification procedure that the director of a public-use airport must complete before the director may perfect a lien on an abandoned aircraft. Specifically, the director must search the airport's appropriate records and contact the FAA's Aircraft Registration Branch and the Office of Aviation to determine the name and address of the abandoned aircraft's last registered owner. Within 20 days of receiving that information, the director must then send notice to the owner identified by the FAA and the Office of Aviation. The notice must include:

- A description of the abandoned aircraft, including its FAA N-Number, manufacturer name, model designation, and serial number;
- The location of the abandoned aircraft on the airport premises;
- The amount of any fees and charges for the use of the airport by the abandoned aircraft that have accrued; and
- Information informing the owner that the airport may seek to perfect a lien if, within 30 calendar days after the receipt of notice or notification that delivery was not possible, the owner does not remove the abandoned aircraft and pay all of the accrued fees and charges.

The notice may be sent either by certified or express mail with return receipt requested, by certified mail with electronic tracking, by a commercial carrier service utilizing any form of delivery requiring a signed receipt, or by personal service. If the owner does not respond to the notice, does not remove the abandoned aircraft, and does not pay the accrued fees and charges in full within 30 days of receipt of the notice (or notification that delivery was not possible), the director may proceed in perfecting a lien on the abandoned aircraft. The failure of the owner to receive the notice of removal does not invalidate a perfected lien, provided that the director of the public-use airport complied with the notice procedures.²¹

²⁰ R.C. 1311.72, 1311.73, 1311.74, not in the act, 1311.75, 1311.76, 1311.77, 1311.78, not in the act, 1311.79, not in the act, and 1311.80, not in the act.

²¹ R.C. 1311.721.

Disposal process for derelict aircraft

Notification

The act also establishes procedures for a director of a public-use airport to dispose of a derelict aircraft that is located on the airport premises. Before disposal, the director must follow a similar search and notice procedure as the director would for placing a lien on an abandoned aircraft. Namely, the director must search its own records and contact the FAA Aircraft Registration Branch and the Office of Aviation to find the last registered owner *and* any person having legal or equitable interest in the derelict aircraft (hereinafter, “owner”).

Within 20 days of receiving that information, the director must send a notice to the owner by certified or express mail with return receipt requested, by certified mail with electronic tracking, by a commercial carrier service utilizing any form of delivery requiring a signed receipt, or by personal service. In addition to the notice sent to the owner, the director also must file a copy of the notice with the FAA’s Aircraft Registration Branch and post of copy of the notice on the airport’s website.

The notice itself is similar to the notice sent regarding a lien on an abandoned aircraft. Thus, the notice must identify the aircraft, its location, and the fees and charges that have accrued. However, the notice also must specify that the airport may remove, sell, scrap, or otherwise dispose of the derelict aircraft if, within 30 calendar days after the date of receipt of the notice or notification that delivery was not possible, the owner does not remove the derelict aircraft from the airport and pay all accrued fees and charges.²²

Disposal

If the owner does not pay the accrued fees and charges in full and remove the derelict aircraft within 30 days of receipt of the notice (or notification that delivery was not possible), the director of the public-use airport may do one of the following:

- Sell the derelict aircraft at public auction; or
- Dispose of the derelict aircraft through an aircraft salvage or scrap metal dealer.

If sold at public auction, the director must give notice of the date, time, and place of the sale at least ten calendar days prior to the sale in a written publication of general circulation in the airport’s county. The director also may give written notice to any person known to have an interest in purchasing the derelict aircraft.

If disposed of through an aircraft salvage or scrap metal dealer, the director may negotiate with the dealer for the price to be received or paid by the director, based on the circumstances. The director must prepare and maintain all information pertaining to the establishment of that price and its justification. The negotiated price (whatever it may be) is considered a commercially reasonable price.

If the final price of the derelict aircraft is less than the accrued fees and charges against the derelict aircraft (or if the director must pay for it to be salvaged/scrapped), the prior owner

²² R.C. 4561.26.

of the derelict aircraft remains liable to the airport for any remaining fees, charges, and the costs paid to the dealer. The airport may recover those fees, charges, and costs by any remedies otherwise provided by law.

If the final sale price is more than the accrued fees and charges against the aircraft, the director must pay all excess proceeds to the following individuals:

1. Any other known lienholders, according to the priority of the liens;
2. The owner of the aircraft, if the owner can be determined and located; or
3. The Director of Commerce, to be deposited as unclaimed funds into the Unclaimed Funds Trust Fund, if the owner cannot be determined or located.

Any good faith purchaser or recipient of the derelict aircraft sold or obtained through the process established by the act takes the derelict aircraft free and clear of the rights or liens of any other person holding legal or equitable interest to the aircraft, regardless of whether that interest was recorded. The purchaser or recipient must notify the FAA and the Office of Aviation of the change in registered ownership.²³

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	02-27-23
Reported, H. Aviation & Aerospace	04-10-24
Passed House (89-2)	04-24-24
Reported, S. Transportation	12-18-24
Passed Senate (30-0)	12-18-24
House concurred in Senate amendments (85-3)	12-18-24

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²³ R.C. 4561.27.