

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 840
By: Zaffirini
Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised that state law currently treats property and persons near the border in an inequitable manner by permitting the use of unmanned aircraft in Texas to capture images of real property or persons on real property that are within 25 miles of the United States border. C.S.S.B. 840 seeks to address these and other concerns by revising the law relating to the lawful capturing of an image using an unmanned aircraft.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 840 amends the Government Code to remove as a lawful use of an unmanned aircraft in Texas the capturing of an image of real property or a person on real property that is within 25 miles of the United States border. The bill makes the capturing of an image using such an aircraft by or for a telecommunications provider lawful to the same extent and for the same purposes as an image captured by or for an electric or natural gas utility. The bill makes the capturing of an image using such an aircraft lawful in Texas if the image is captured by an employee of an insurance company or of an affiliate of the company in connection with the underwriting of an insurance policy, or the rating or adjusting of an insurance claim, regarding real property or a structure on real property and the operator of the aircraft is authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct operations within the airspace from which the image is captured.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2017.

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 840 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

SENATE ENGROSSED		HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE	
SECTION 1.	Section 423.002(a),	SECTION 1.	Section 423.002(a),

85R 31369

17.136.1037

Substitute Document Number: 85R 29127

Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) It is lawful to capture an image using an unmanned aircraft in this state:

(1) for the purpose of professional or scholarly research and development or for another academic purpose by a person acting on behalf of an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, including a person who:

(A) is a professor, employee, or student of the institution; or

(B) is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of the institution;

(2) in airspace designated as a test site or range authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration for the purpose of integrating unmanned aircraft systems into the national airspace;

(3) as part of an operation, exercise, or mission of any branch of the United States military;

(4) if the image is captured by a satellite for the purposes of mapping;

(5) if the image is captured by or for an electric or natural gas utility:

(A) for operations and maintenance of utility facilities for the purpose of maintaining utility system reliability and integrity;

(B) for inspecting utility facilities to determine repair, maintenance, or replacement needs during and after construction of such facilities;

(C) for assessing vegetation growth for the purpose of maintaining clearances on utility easements; and

(D) for utility facility routing and siting for the purpose of providing utility service;

(6) with the consent of the individual who owns or lawfully occupies the real property captured in the image;

(7) pursuant to a valid search or arrest warrant;

(8) if the image is captured by a law enforcement authority or a person who is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of a law

Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) It is lawful to capture an image using an unmanned aircraft in this state:

(1) for the purpose of professional or scholarly research and development or for another academic purpose by a person acting on behalf of an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, including a person who:

(A) is a professor, employee, or student of the institution; or

(B) is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of the institution;

(2) in airspace designated as a test site or range authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration for the purpose of integrating unmanned aircraft systems into the national airspace;

(3) as part of an operation, exercise, or mission of any branch of the United States military;

(4) if the image is captured by a satellite for the purposes of mapping;

(5) if the image is captured by or for an electric or natural gas utility or a telecommunications provider:

(A) for operations and maintenance of utility or telecommunications facilities for the purpose of maintaining utility or telecommunications system reliability and integrity;

(B) for inspecting utility or telecommunications facilities to determine repair, maintenance, or replacement needs during and after construction of such facilities;

(C) for assessing vegetation growth for the purpose of maintaining clearances on utility or telecommunications easements; and

(D) for utility or telecommunications facility routing and siting for the purpose of providing utility or telecommunications service;

(6) with the consent of the individual who owns or lawfully occupies the real property captured in the image;

(7) pursuant to a valid search or arrest warrant;

(8) if the image is captured by a law enforcement authority or a person who is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of a law

enforcement authority:

(A) in immediate pursuit of a person law enforcement officers have reasonable suspicion or probable cause to suspect has committed an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable by a fine only;

(B) for the purpose of documenting a crime scene where an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable by a fine only, has been committed;

(C) for the purpose of investigating the scene of:

(i) a human fatality;

(ii) a motor vehicle accident causing death or serious bodily injury to a person; or

(iii) any motor vehicle accident on a state highway or federal interstate or highway;

(D) in connection with the search for a missing person;

(E) for the purpose of conducting a high-risk tactical operation that poses a threat to human life; [ø]

(F) of private property that is generally open to the public where the property owner consents to law enforcement public safety responsibilities; or

(G) of real property or a person on real property that is within 25 miles of the United States border for the sole purpose of ensuring border security;

(9) if the image is captured by state or local law enforcement authorities, or a person who is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of state authorities, for the purpose of:

(A) surveying the scene of a catastrophe or other damage to determine whether a state of emergency should be declared;

(B) preserving public safety, protecting property, or surveying damage or contamination during a lawfully declared state of emergency; or

(C) conducting routine air quality sampling and monitoring, as provided by state or local law;

(10) at the scene of a spill, or a suspected spill, of hazardous materials;

(11) for the purpose of fire suppression;

(12) for the purpose of rescuing a person whose life or well-being is in imminent danger;

(13) if the image is captured by a Texas licensed real estate broker in connection with the marketing, sale, or financing of real property, provided that no individual is

enforcement authority:

(A) in immediate pursuit of a person law enforcement officers have reasonable suspicion or probable cause to suspect has committed an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable by a fine only;

(B) for the purpose of documenting a crime scene where an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable by a fine only, has been committed;

(C) for the purpose of investigating the scene of:

(i) a human fatality;

(ii) a motor vehicle accident causing death or serious bodily injury to a person; or

(iii) any motor vehicle accident on a state highway or federal interstate or highway;

(D) in connection with the search for a missing person;

(E) for the purpose of conducting a high-risk tactical operation that poses a threat to human life; or

(F) of private property that is generally open to the public where the property owner consents to law enforcement public safety responsibilities;

(9) if the image is captured by state or local law enforcement authorities, or a person who is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of state authorities, for the purpose of:

(A) surveying the scene of a catastrophe or other damage to determine whether a state of emergency should be declared;

(B) preserving public safety, protecting property, or surveying damage or contamination during a lawfully declared state of emergency; or

(C) conducting routine air quality sampling and monitoring, as provided by state or local law;

(10) at the scene of a spill, or a suspected spill, of hazardous materials;

(11) for the purpose of fire suppression;

(12) for the purpose of rescuing a person whose life or well-being is in imminent danger;

(13) if the image is captured by a Texas licensed real estate broker in connection with the marketing, sale, or financing of real property, provided that no individual is

identifiable in the image;

~~(14) [of real property or a person on real property that is within 25 miles of the United States border;~~

~~[(15)]~~ from a height no more than eight feet above ground level in a public place, if the image was captured without using any electronic, mechanical, or other means to amplify the image beyond normal human perception;

~~(15) [(16)]~~ of public real property or a person on that property;

~~(16) [(17)]~~ if the image is captured by the owner or operator of an oil, gas, water, or other pipeline for the purpose of inspecting, maintaining, or repairing pipelines or other related facilities, and is captured without the intent to conduct surveillance on an individual or real property located in this state;

~~(17) [(18)]~~ in connection with oil pipeline safety and rig protection;

~~(18) [(19)]~~ in connection with port authority surveillance and security;

~~(19) [(20)]~~ if the image is captured by a registered professional land surveyor in connection with the practice of professional surveying, as those terms are defined by Section 1071.002, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is identifiable in the image; or

~~(20) [(21)]~~ if the image is captured by a professional engineer licensed under Subchapter G, Chapter 1001, Occupations Code, in connection with the practice of engineering, as defined by Section 1001.003, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is identifiable in the image.

SECTION 2. The change in law made by this Act applies only to an offense committed on or after the effective date of

85R 31369

Substitute Document Number: 85R 29127

identifiable in the image;

~~(14) [of real property or a person on real property that is within 25 miles of the United States border;~~

~~[(15)]~~ from a height no more than eight feet above ground level in a public place, if the image was captured without using any electronic, mechanical, or other means to amplify the image beyond normal human perception;

~~(15) [(16)]~~ of public real property or a person on that property;

~~(16) [(17)]~~ if the image is captured by the owner or operator of an oil, gas, water, or other pipeline for the purpose of inspecting, maintaining, or repairing pipelines or other related facilities, and is captured without the intent to conduct surveillance on an individual or real property located in this state;

~~(17) [(18)]~~ in connection with oil pipeline safety and rig protection;

~~(18) [(19)]~~ in connection with port authority surveillance and security;

~~(19) [(20)]~~ if the image is captured by a registered professional land surveyor in connection with the practice of professional surveying, as those terms are defined by Section 1071.002, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is identifiable in the image; ~~or~~

~~(20) [(21)]~~ if the image is captured by a professional engineer licensed under Subchapter G, Chapter 1001, Occupations Code, in connection with the practice of engineering, as defined by Section 1001.003, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is identifiable in the image; or
(21) if:

(A) the image is captured by an employee of an insurance company or of an affiliate of the company in connection with the underwriting of an insurance policy, or the rating or adjusting of an insurance claim, regarding real property or a structure on real property; and

(B) the operator of the unmanned aircraft is authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct operations within the airspace from which the image is captured.

SECTION 2. Same as engrossed version.

17.136.1037

this Act. An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

SECTION 3. Same as engrossed version.