

HCS HB 324 -- USE OF AN UNMANNED AIRCRAFT

SPONSOR: Henderson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill creates the offense of unlawful use of an unmanned aircraft near a correctional center. A person commits such offense if he or she operates an unmanned aircraft within a vertical distance of 300 feet, extending from ground level, or a horizontal distance to the correctional center property line or allows an unmanned aircraft to make contact with a correctional center, including any person or object on the premises of or within the facility. The bill provides exceptions to the offense.

The offense of unlawful use of an unmanned aircraft near a correctional center is a class A misdemeanor unless the person uses the unmanned aircraft for the purpose of:

- (1) Delivering a weapon or other article that may be used in such a manner to endanger the life of an offender or correctional center employee, in which case it is a class B felony;
- (2) Facilitating an escape from confinement, in which case it's a class C felony; or
- (3) Delivering a controlled substance, in which case it is a class D felony.

Each correctional center shall post a sign of the provisions of the offense. The sign must be at least 11" by 14" and be posted in a conspicuous location.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this is keeping up with new technology, and they have been dealing with this since 2016. Since that time, there have been at least 11 drones flown over Missouri's correctional centers. There is no offense, currently, but inmates and correctional center employees fear for their safety when they see a drone near the center.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Henderson and the Missouri Department of Corrections.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.