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STUDY SCOPE

Drone Use Regulation

Focus

This study examines current and potential drone use regulation in Connecticut. Taking into account emerging interest in and availability of drones, as well as new and changing federal regulation, an analysis of potential state legislative action regarding drone use will be made.

Background

Drones are unmanned aircraft, which are also referred to as unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Typically, drones are operated via remote-control using radio frequencies, but can also operate semi-autonomously via internal computer. Varying in size, drones may be small enough to fit in a hand or have wingspans that rival passenger airplanes. Drones are commonly equipped with cameras or other surveillance gear, but can also be used as weapon delivery systems.

Drones have been most closely associated with military use for combat, surveillance, and reconnaissance. However, there is increasing interest in potential government, commercial, and personal applications. The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) anticipates that by 2030, there will be 30,000 public and private drones flying in U.S. air, compared to 50,000 manned aircraft. This expected proliferation has raised issues about several aspects of drone use, including privacy concerns (e.g., personal or police use of drones for surveillance activities), safety (e.g., drone interference with manned aircraft or crashes with persons or property), and commercial activity.

Regulatory authority over drone use is shared across different levels of government. Federal drone regulation is currently administered by the FAA. As part of a 2012 funding bill, Congress ordered the agency to “develop a comprehensive plan to safely accelerate the integration of civil unmanned aircraft systems into the national airspace system.” This plan was presented in September 2013. However, as of early 2014, FAA regulations were in flux.

At the state level, 43 states introduced 130 bills and resolutions addressing drones in 2013, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. By the end of that year, 13 states enacted laws on drones, and 10 other states adopted resolutions on their use. No state regulation or legislation related to drone use has been adopted in Connecticut. Legislation pertaining to drone use was introduced during Connecticut’s 2014 legislative session, but legislative action was deferred pending further study.

Areas of Analysis

1. Describe and define types of drones and drone use.
 - a. Examine drone use, including the following types of use:
 - i. Commercial
 - ii. Governmental
 - a) Law enforcement
 - b) Emergency response
 - iii. Personal
 - iv. Criminal
 - b. Identify issues and concerns related to drone use (e.g., safety, privacy, and security), including for the types of use listed above.
2. Identify a range of potential drone use regulations.
 - a. Discuss the rationale for regulatory efforts by type of use.
 - b. Examine the likely impacts of potential regulatory actions.
 - c. Identify practices or guidelines established by relevant organizations or associations.
3. Describe current federal and state drone use regulation.
 - a. Differentiate regulatory responsibilities by government level.
 - b. Examine federal role in drone use restriction, including recent and expected changes.
 - c. Analyze drone use regulation in other states.
 - i. Determine which aspects of use are restricted by other states.
 - ii. Review implementation of regulation programs in other states.
 - iii. Compare training and certification requirements in other states.
4. Determine what, if any, drone use regulation is necessary and feasible in Connecticut at this time.
 - a. If regulation is advised, identify what entity or entities in Connecticut should have primary authority regarding the state's regulatory and enforcement efforts.

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