



Examining the risks, benefits of unmanned aircraft systems

By REP. JOEL FRY House District 27 joel.fry@legis.state.ia.us
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The House Public Safety Committee has started investigating the use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), also commonly referred to as drones, in the State of Iowa. Five state representatives (Klein, Fry, Baudler, Anderson, Berry) will be amending House File 427 to address the use of UAS by the State and by private citizens.

Unmanned aircraft systems vary in size, shape and purpose. According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), UAS can be as large as Boeing 737's or as small as radio controlled helicopters. Because of the varying sizes and uses, the FAA is beginning the long process of determining how UAS should be used and regulated.

Currently, the FAA has selected six research and test sites across the country. The locations include, the University of Alaska, Nevada, New York's Griffiss International Airport, North Dakota, Texas A&M — Corpus Christi and Virginia Polytechnic Institute with Virginia Tech. Each test site will focus on different research, including climate impacts on UAS, certification requirements, FAA safety oversight, airworthiness testing and risks of UAS.

States across the nation are divided on the use of UAS. In 2013, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, Maryland and other states appropriated money for various programs to aid in the study of UAS.

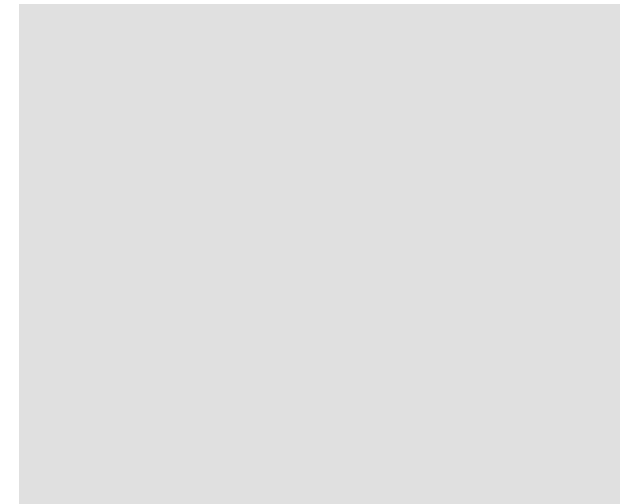
Other states, such as Florida, Illinois, Oregon, Tennessee and Texas placed strict standards on the use of UAS by state agencies. In most cases, law enforcement and other agencies will now have to obtain a search warrant to use a UAS. However, a majority of states have not passed any major legislation on this important issue.

Experts on unmanned aircraft systems have suggested that they could be used for many purposes. In times of natural disasters or terrorist attacks, UAS can safely fly where a manned aircraft wouldn't be able.

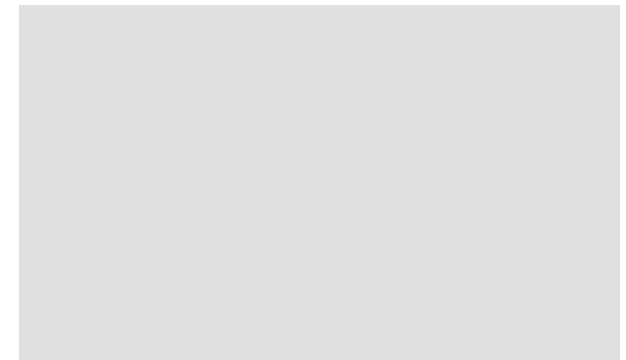
The information collected by the UAS could be used to help facilitate a rescue operation or clear a dangerous area without the risk to human life. UAS can also be used in more destructive ways. Some organizations have planned to use UAS to harass or intimidate others, including people who are lawfully hunting or fishing. Preventing intimidation through the use of UAS is a major focus for Iowa Legislators.

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As the legislative session continues, representatives are open to legislative changes to ensure that unmanned aircraft systems are used in a safe and responsible manner. One that respects private property rights but also assists law enforcement with legal purposes. Individuals interested in this issue are urged to contact their local representative.

Please join me at one of my legislative coffees during the course of the 2014 legislative session.

- Friday, Feb. 28

Noon, Lakeside Casino in Osceola

- Friday March 28

Noon, Lakeside Casino in Osceola

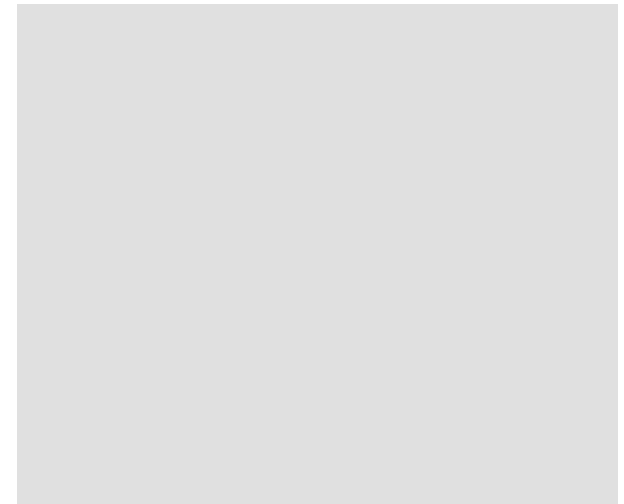
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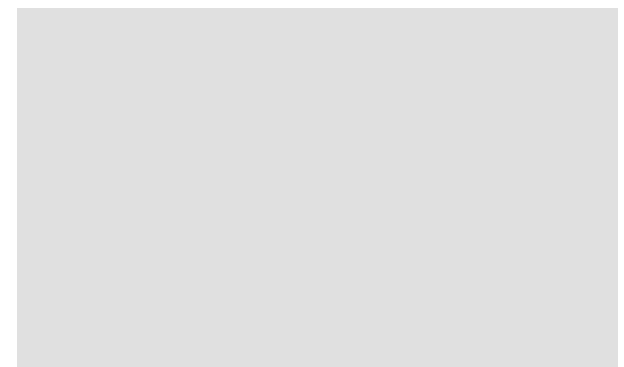


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Reader Poll

On Groundhog Day, Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow, which means six more weeks of winter. Do you agree with the world's most famous rodent?

Yes

No

I'd rather ask Bill Murray.

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