

Pointing lasers at aircraft to be defined as assault in Iowa law

by [O. Kay Henderson](#) | Mar 19, 2024 | [Crime & Courts](#), [News](#), [Politics & Government](#)



Pointing a laser at an aircraft has been a federal crime since 2018 and it is likely to become a state crime soon.

A federal conviction carries a prison term of up to five years and an \$11,000 fine for a single incident. Senator Dan Dawson of Council Bluffs explains what state penalties are proposed "Depending on the conduct and injury, the penalties range from a misdemeanor to a Class C felony," Dawson said.

A judge could sentence someone to up to a decade in prison for a Class C felony conviction. A bill making it a state crime to point a laser at an airplane cleared the Senate unanimously a year ago. The Iowa House approved it this week, sending it to the governor for her signature. Representative Sami Scheetz of Cedar Rapids pointed to a 2021 case in which a laser was aimed at an Iowa National Guard helicopter flying in the Waterloo area.

"This is a good bill that will help protect the members of the National Guard in our state," Scheetz said.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, between 2010 and 2010, there 271 incidents of lasers being pointed at aircraft flying over Iowa. Officials say if a laser hits the Plexiglas windshield of an aircraft, it can flood the entire cockpit with light and temporarily blind a pilot. Pilots reported over 13,000 laser incidents to [the FAA](#) in 2023.