

Chapter 583

S.B. No. 840

AN ACT

relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 423.002(a), 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

1 purposes of mapping;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 (B) for the purpose of documenting a crime scene  
27 where an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable

1 by a fine only, has been committed;

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

4 (i) a human fatality;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 (B) preserving public safety, protecting  
27 property, or surveying damage or contamination during a lawfully

1 declared state of emergency; or

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

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

6 (11) for the purpose of fire suppression;

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

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

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

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

19 (15) [~~(16)~~] of public real property or a person on  
20 that property;

21 (16) [~~(17)~~] if the image is captured by the owner or  
22 operator of an oil, gas, water, or other pipeline for the purpose of  
23 inspecting, maintaining, or repairing pipelines or other related  
24 facilities, and is captured without the intent to conduct  
25 surveillance on an individual or real property located in this  
26 state;

27 (17) [~~(18)~~] in connection with oil pipeline safety and

1 rig protection;

2           (18) [~~(19)~~] in connection with port authority  
3 surveillance and security;

4           (19) [~~(20)~~] if the image is captured by a registered  
5 professional land surveyor in connection with the practice of  
6 professional surveying, as those terms are defined by Section  
7 1071.002, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is  
8 identifiable in the image; [~~or~~]

9           (20) [~~(21)~~] if the image is captured by a professional  
10 engineer licensed under Subchapter G, Chapter 1001, Occupations  
11 Code, in connection with the practice of engineering, as defined by  
12 Section 1001.003, Occupations Code, provided that no individual is  
13 identifiable in the image; or

14           (21) if:

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

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

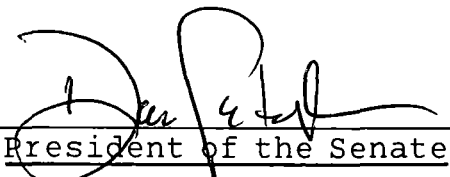
23           SECTION 2. The change in law made by this Act applies only  
24 to an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act.  
25 An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is  
26 governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed,  
27 and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For

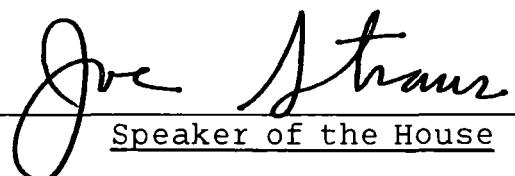
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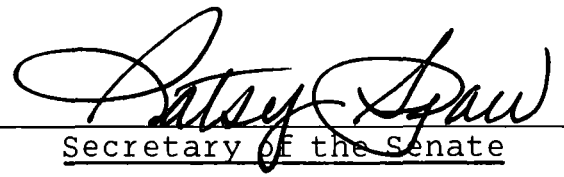
1 purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the  
2 effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred  
3 before that date.

4 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017. \_\_\_\_\_

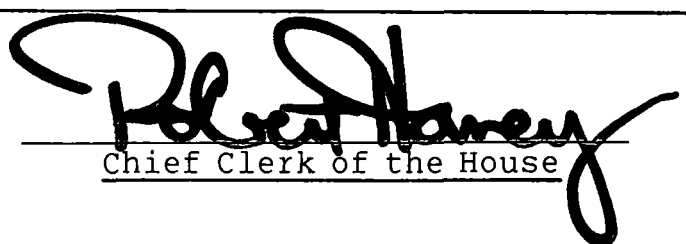
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President of the Senate

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 840 passed the Senate on April 18, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendments on May 25, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0. \_\_\_\_\_

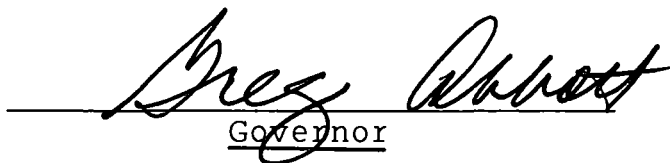
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 840 passed the House, with amendments, on May 23, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 142, Nays 5, one present not voting. \_\_\_\_\_

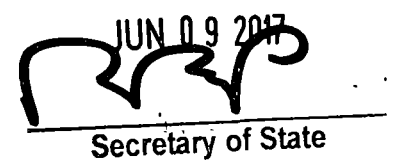
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

6 - 9 - 2017  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
7:00 PM O'CLOCK

JUN 09 2017  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of State

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD  
Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 85TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION**

**May 23, 2017**

**TO:** Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor, Senate

**FROM:** Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE: SB840** by Zaffirini (Relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.), As  
**Passed 2nd House**

**No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.**

The bill would amend the Government Code relating to what images an unmanned aircraft can capture.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**Local Government Impact**

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 405 Department of Public Safety

**LBB Staff:** UP, SLE, LBO, GG, BM, FR

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD  
Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 85TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION**

**May 16, 2017**

**TO:** Honorable Phil King, Chair, House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety

**FROM:** Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE: SB840** by Zaffirini (Relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.),  
**Committee Report 2nd House, Substituted**

|   |
|---|
| <b>No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.</b> |
|---|

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No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 405 Department of Public Safety

**LBB Staff:** UP, LBO, GG, BM, FR



**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD**  
**Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 85TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION**

**April 7, 2017**

**TO:** Honorable Donna Campbell, Chair, Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Border Security

**FROM:** Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE:** SB840 by Zaffirini (Relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.),  
**Committee Report 1st House, Substituted**

**No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.**

The bill would amend the Government Code relating to what images an unmanned aircraft can capture.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**Local Government Impact**

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 405 Department of Public Safety

**LBB Staff:** UP, LBO, GG, BM, FR

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD  
Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 85TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION**

**March 13, 2017**

**TO:** Honorable Donna Campbell, Chair, Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Border Security

**FROM:** Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE: SB840** by Zaffirini (Relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.), As Introduced

**No fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.**

The bill would amend the Government Code relating to what images an unmanned aircraft can capture.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**Local Government Impact**

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 405 Department of Public Safety

**LBB Staff:** UP, LBO, GG, BM, FR