



**Senate Fiscal Agency**  
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 715 (Substitute S-1 as reported)  
Sponsor: Senator Wayne Schmidt  
Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 2-22-18

### **RATIONALE**

The Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act established the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force to develop statewide policy recommendations on the operation, use, and regulation of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), which are commonly called drones. The Task Force was required to submit a report with the recommendations to the Governor and the standing committees in the House and Senate that deal with transportation issues within three months after the Task Force's first meeting. The report was submitted on November 20, 2017. In the report, the Task Force recommended the enactment of a State law "to prohibit UAS interference with the operation of key and unique facilities". The report used Mackinac Island as a "strong example" of a unique facility in Michigan. For this reason, it has been suggested that the State enact legislation that would allow the island to regulate UAS.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act to allow a political subdivision that prohibits the operation of nonemergency motor vehicles in the political subdivision to enact or enforce an ordinance or resolution regulating the ownership or operation of unmanned aircraft, so long as that ordinance or resolution did not regulate the ownership or operation of unmanned aircraft by a person authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration to operate UAS for commercial purposes.**

Under the Act, except as expressly authorized by statute, a political subdivision may not enact or enforce an ordinance or resolution that regulates the ownership or operation of unmanned aircraft, or otherwise engage in the regulation of the ownership or operation of unmanned aircraft. Under the bill, this provision would not apply to a political subdivision as described above.

The bill would take effect 90 days after it was enacted.

MCL 259.305

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

Mackinac Island is a Michigan tourist destination located in Lake Huron between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas. Tripadvisor.com listed Mackinac Island as 10<sup>th</sup> on its 2016 Travelers' Choice "Top 10 Islands - United States". One of the island's unique features is the prohibition of automobiles. Tourists use horses, carriages, and bicycles for transportation around the island's nearly four square miles of land area.

According to Senate Transportation Committee testimony, UAS frighten the island's horses, which can be hazardous for people on the island. If the operation of UAS is unrestricted, the horses might become scared and run uncontrollably on streets with dense pedestrian traffic. Although none of them resulted in anything serious, the island already has had several potentially dangerous incidents.

The island's tourism season is approaching quickly. Authorizing it to regulate UAS would help ensure resident and tourist safety.

**Response:** Taking a more holistic approach to addressing the Task Force's recommendations in State law would be more efficient than acting on the recommendations gradually or in separate steps.

Legislative Analyst: Drew Krogulecki

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Ryan Bergan

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.