

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 12, 2015

1:06 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Shelley Hughes, Co-Chair
Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Dan Ortiz

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Benjamin Nageak

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5
Recognizing the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

- MOVED CSHJR 5(TRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

Ambler Road Project Detail

- REMOVED FROM AGENDA

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 5

SHORT TITLE: RECOGNIZE ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HUGHES

01/21/15	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/21/15	(H)	TRA
02/12/15	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 17

WITNESS REGISTER

STEVE COLLIGAN, Volunteer
Academy of Model Aeronautics
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HCR 5.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR NEAL FOSTER called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. Representatives Millett, Stutes, Claman, Ortiz, Foster, and Hughes were present at the call to order.

HJR 5-RECOGNIZE ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS

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CO-CHAIR FOSTER announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5, Recognizing the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

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CHAIR HUGHES, speaking as the prime sponsor of HJR 5, said this resolution is a work product of the Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems. Last fall, the task force met and recognized that the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) has been instrumental in the nation in establishing safe and best practices to promote good use of remotely-piloted aircraft, also known as unmanned aircraft. This organization has been recognized by the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration], who has allowed this community-based organization to lead the way in setting safety standards.

CHAIR HUGHES referred to three items in members' packets provide by FAA [but drafted by the AMA] that help provide a sense of the significance the AMA has had across the country on safe practices. Each item contains a link to the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA). One, entitled "model aircraft operations" contains a link to "Know Before You Fly." Second, the handout entitled "What Can I Do with My Model Aircraft?" provides a community-based set of safety guidelines, and a poster on the FAA's website, which is helpful for people who may be hobbyists or casual users, and lists a website, model aircraft.org, that redirects users to the AMA's website. With the increasing use and affordability of these unmanned aircraft units, the Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems felt that it was important for Alaskans to be aware of the safety and best practices promoted by the AMA, which is why HJR 5 was introduced. She deferred to Steve Colligan, who serves on the

Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems and represents the Academy of Model Aeronautics, to discuss HJR 5.

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STEVE COLLIGAN, Volunteer, Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA), speaking as a volunteer for the AMA, stated that model airplanes and organized youth hockey changed his life and it was great to be involved in an organization that got him interested in electronics, mechanics, and doing something productive.

MR. COLLIGAN said that the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) is almost 80 years old. He referred to a 75th anniversary document of the AMA that describes the history of the organization, which existed before general aviation or commercial aviation even existed. People often think of drones when they think of unmanned aircraft and the differences between a model aircraft and a drone are very blurred, he said, but since radios were first used, there has always been an evolution in electronics. Being involved with the FAA and communities has meant constantly adjusting safety standards and best practices to represent the next evolution for the AMA. The Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) provides information to communities and works to promote math, science, and engineering. During this latest [model aeronautics] iteration, which he called "the drama of the drones," there has been a lack of education and understanding even though the AMA has had rules and safety standards in place for years. Due to these evolving standards, the AMA has been proactively incorporating the latest standards into the education process, he said.

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MR. COLLIGAN reported that the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) has voluntarily been self-regulated and self-insured, both for the pilots and the airfields in which they operate. The latest example of the collective effort between the AMA and the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) is the "Know before You Fly" campaign. The AUVSI, which is a worldwide international nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of unmanned systems and robotics for commercial operators, includes defense contractors, manufacturers, and governmental agencies that represent the industry coming together through a portal to access information. In fact, it is a fulltime job to keep abreast of regulations and dispel rumors related to UAS (unmanned aircraft systems). He emphasized the AMA's role: to educate people on the regulations, best

practices, and safety. He applauded the sponsor and her staff, [Ginger Blaisdell], in leading the Legislative Task Force on Unmanned [Aircraft Systems] to provide a forum to discuss privacy, public safety issues, and appropriate uses of unmanned aircraft. He relayed that [model aviation] technology is similar to gun safety, in that [safe use] is all about education, appropriate use, and standards. Most people are not aware of existing rules related to this technology, including that operators cannot fly within five miles of an airport without notifying the airport, that the operator must have a copilot, and that a certification process exists. He has participated in middle school training and students are excited for the opportunity to have hands-on experience and learn about this technology.

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MR. COLLIGAN referred to an incident in which a man recently piloted an unmanned aircraft/drone that crashed on the White House lawn. At the time the [Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems] began, 10,000 - 11,000 devices similar to that drone were used on U.S. soil every month - from one vendor and one model, he said; however, each time events such as the one just mentioned occurs, it drives up more interest. Through community-based organizations, especially in Alaska, the AMA's mission has been to promote best practices at every level, including ensuring state and government [agencies] understand current regulations. In addition, Alaska's weather and [open] space provides for a unique test environment. Speaking as an individual, and as a mapping professional, he asked members to support the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA). Although it is now technically possible to equip a small drone with a "Go-Pro" camera and perform intricate quantitative analysis at a construction site; unfortunately, unmanned aircraft technology cannot be used for commercial purposes at this time. He emphasized that this technology is evolving, but also stressed the importance of having public involvement in the process. He highlighted that opportunities exist to use this technology to manage resources, vegetation analysis, and many other things in Alaska.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES commented that Alaska has been on the leading front on [unmanned aircraft use], in part due to the research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the number of entrepreneurs in the industry, but also because Alaska has

significant air space that makes it a great place for testing. On the policy front, Alaska has also taken the lead. She shared efforts the [Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems] took once the task force learned that drones were expected to be in the top five Christmas gifts for the season. The task force created and provided an Alaska customized "Know Before You Fly" safety guidelines sheet to distribute to vendors in an effort to encourage parents to put the informative flyer in the package. The task force also created a website, Alaskadrones.org to provide resources to the public, including the safety guidelines sheet.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES, speaking as the Co-Chair of the [Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems], said she is encouraged and excited about the industry uses. She emphasized that privacy and safety will continue to be the top priority; however, she characterized unmanned aircraft/drones as being a neutral piece of technology. People have expressed concerns about drones being used to spy, but she stressed that the technology is "neutral." It is really about how the operator uses the unmanned aircraft, so part of what the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) does is to promote casual and hobby use of this technology in a safe way, which dovetails with the best practices the task force promotes. These best practices include making sure safety requirements and regulations are followed, such as checking in prior to using devices at airports and operating them under 400 feet. It also informs operators about privacy issues so they know where to fly them and how to operate them. Since aviation is very important in Alaska - Alaska has more pilots per capita than in other states - and Alaska has a limited number of roads, it has become especially important to educate those using drones about when, where, and how to fly them to prevent accidents. Certainly it's important for operators to have fun, but it's equally important for users to know how to properly use [unmanned aircraft]. As Mr. Colligan stated, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) has been working on these issues for decades, leading the way with education, and [the task force] would like Alaskans to recognize the AMA's role and to encourage them to use the AMA's resources as guidelines.

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REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ acknowledged how quickly technology moves. He asked whether the industry can keep pace with questions and

wondered about concerns of privacy in relationship to the speed at which this industry is moving.

MR. COLLIGAN, speaking as a member of the Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems, answered that privacy and public safety is the number one concern of the task force and the task force worked with the Department of Law to review other states' laws. One question that arose was consideration of the length of time to retain videos for evidence. He viewed the unmanned aircraft technology as a convergence technology disrupter. Although it is possible to outlaw specific devices, each component [in unmanned aircraft] consists of a standard electronic component that has been combined together, he said. As a hobbyist, he noted, there are many ways to build drones and it is currently possible to control them with devices such as an Apple iPhone; hence, the need for additional consumer education.

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MR. COLLIGAN said the technology has advanced to the point where drones are safer and easier to fly, using multi-rotors instead of fixed wing models, in fact, they are incredibly easy to fly and are more intuitive to use. However, the technology is different from a hobbyist's perspective than from a professional commercial operator's perspective and the difference comes down to use and intent, he said. The U.S. Supreme Court has already tested the reasonable expectation of privacy, including the invasion of privacy or inappropriate use, and it doesn't really matter if people are taking aerial photos using a drone or a smart phone since the same laws apply. Although some aerial photos are not allowed due to the FAA's regulation of airspace, people can currently take oblique photos. Due to the lack of formal regulations, it is especially important for everyone to know the rules and to follow best practices. He agreed that technology is outpacing bureaucracy by two to one. The [task force] and the university embrace the technology and working to inform and educate consumers, including requiring vendors to put safety information in the box with the unmanned aircraft.

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REPRESENTATIVE STUTES stated that she is all for this [resolution] and she finds [the technology] to be very exciting. She recalled when her young son built models with his father. She suggested that this technology can also benefit people since it will bring them outside and into the sun, noting the benefits of vitamin D. Today's testimony also reinforces her support

[for the technology], knowing of the increased safety information and about the AMA's website, she said. She characterized this technology as bringing the 50s into this century.

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REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said he is also pleased to support the resolution. He recalled using model aircraft attached by strings and how easily the models crashed and broke. With the advent of radio technology came lighter materials, but he recalled the carnage from errors his son made while flying model airplanes. He acknowledged that most people who buy models in stores don't have any idea about the rules and regulations or best practices. He offered his belief that it is important to educate the public on safety and about privacy concerns. He agreed the technology is advancing much faster than anyone can keep up with so he applauded this effort. He noticed an amendment was in members' packets.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLETT asked to comment prior to taking up any proposed amendments. She offered her support for the resolution. She suggested it might be a good idea to send copies of the resolution to other organizations since HJR 5 highlights the [Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems'] work with several organizations, including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the University of Alaska (UA), and the Association for Unmanned Vehicles Systems International (AUVSI) so perhaps they should also receive copies of this resolution since the [legislature and the AMA] plan to work with these organizations. She was not sure if it was appropriate to do so, but it seemed like it would be a good message to send.

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MR. COLLIGAN offered his belief that it would be very appropriate and the AMA's intent is to broadcast this as widely as possible. He also pointed out that lots of items, including model aeronautics are sold on the Internet. In fact, Internet sales have brought people back to the local hobby shops seeking information and education. He said the interest in model aeronautics has been good for local industry and for education and awareness.

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CO-CHAIR FOSTER said that this resolution has touched many lives. At one time he had a Buzzard Bombshell, a Decathlon, a Citabria, a Southwest Cawell, and a mini glider, which are all in pieces, he said.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES said she would entertain a conceptual amendment. She also thanked members of the Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems. She offered her belief that of all the technologies, this is the fastest growing. She thought it was very appropriate that the task force will run until 2017.

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REPRESENTATIVE Claman moved to adopt Amendment 1, labeled 29-LS0320\A.1, Strasbaugh, 2/12/15, which read, as follows:

Page 1, line 1, following "**Aeronautics**":

Insert "**for establishing safety guidelines and best practices**"

Page 2, line 1:

Delete "coordinated rules of operation and safety standards"

Insert "established safety standards and best practices"

Page 2, line 14, following "organization":

Insert "that promotes industry and community safety guidelines and best practices"

CO-CHAIR FOSTER objected for purpose of discussion.

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CO-CHAIR HUGHES, speaking to Amendment 1, said that organizations are often recognized through legislative citations, but this resolution, HJR5, does not recognize the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) for the sake of it being an organization, but because the AMA sets the safety guidelines and best practices standards so Amendment 1 changes the title of the resolution. On page 2, line 1, it inserts the language "standards" instead of "guidelines." On page, line 14, language was added to the resolved clause, as follows, "that promotes industry and community safety guidelines and best practices."

She said this is important since it emphasizes the focus of the AMA, rather than to recognize the organization itself.

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CO-CHAIR FOSTER removed his objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLETT made a motion to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1.

CO-CHAIR FOSTER objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLETT explained that Conceptual Amendment [1] would add Michael P. Huerta, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration, as well as any other organizations or entities named in [HJR 5] to be added to the list of those receiving copies.

CO-CHAIR FOSTER removed his objection. There being no further objection, Conceptual Amendment [1] was adopted.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLETT moved to report the HJR 5, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no objection, the CSHJR 5(TRA) was reported from the House Transportation Standing Committee.

1:36:30 PM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:36 p.m.