

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2015

1:01 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Peter Micciche, Chair  
Senator Click Bishop, Vice Chair  
Senator Mike Dunleavy  
Senator Dennis Egan

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Bert Stedman

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Jim Colver

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5(TRA) AM  
Recognizing the Academy of Model Aeronautics for establishing  
safety guidelines and best practices.

- MOVED CSHJR 5(TRA) AM OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 66

"An Act relating to the passenger and recreational vehicle  
rental taxes; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**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
02/12/15	(H)	Moved CSHJR 5(TRA) Out of Committee
02/12/15	(H)	MINUTE(TRA)

02/13/15 (H) TRA RPT CS(TRA) NT 6DP  
02/13/15 (H) DP: STUTES, CLAMAN, ORTIZ, MILLETT,  
HUGHES, FOSTER  
02/18/15 (H) CS(TRA) REPRINTED 2/18/15  
02/20/15 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
02/20/15 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 5(TRA) AM  
02/23/15 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/23/15 (S) TRA  
03/24/15 (S) TRA AT 1:00 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 66

SHORT TITLE: PASSENGER & REC. VEHICLE RENTAL TAX  
SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) GIESSEL

03/04/15 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/04/15 (S) TRA, FIN  
03/24/15 (S) TRA AT 1:00 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

GINGER BLAISDELL, Staff  
Representative Hughes  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Explained the changes in the committee substitute (CS) for HJR 5 for the sponsor.

STEVE COLLIGAN, Director  
Government Affairs  
Alaska Academy of Model Aeronautics  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Commented on the Alaska Academy of Model Aeronautics relative to HJR 5.

RO BAILEY, Director  
University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) test site  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HJR 5.

REPRESENTATIVE SHELLEY HUGHES  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HJR 5.

FORREST WOLFE, Staff  
Senator Giessel  
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 66 for the sponsor.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:01:31 PM](#)

**CHAIR PETER MICCICHE** called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Dunleavy, Egan and Chair Micciche.

[1:01:58 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP joined the committee.

**HJR 5-RECOGNIZE ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS**

[1:02:38 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced HJR 5 to be up for consideration [CSHJR 5(TRA) AM was before the committee].

GINGER BLAISDELL, staff to Representative Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HJR 5, said this resolution recognizes the Academy of Model Aeronautics for establishing safety guidelines and best practices for the hobby and recreational flyers.

She explained that the Federal Aeronautics Administration (FAA) establishes rules for government and commercial use of unmanned aircraft and is not establishing rules for recreational use at this time, but the Academy of Model Aeronautics has been working with hobbyists for over 75 years and has established rules and guidelines for safe flying that are recognized by the FAA.

[1:03:51 PM](#)

MS. BLAISDEL said the sponsor had received a question about resolve language on page 2, line 18 that says, "Alaska State Legislature urges the state to work with federal agencies" and then lines 24 and 25 sends a copy of the resolution only to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The question was why other state agencies aren't receiving copies of the resolution, and the answer is that five state agencies are already on the task force that actually drafted this resolution. So, they would be sending it to themselves, but sending it to the UAF would recognize the test site as it considers recommendations on unmanned aircraft safety rules to the FAA.

CHAIR MICCICHE found no questions from committee members and opened public testimony.

[1:05:46 PM](#)

STEVE COLLIGAN, Director, Government Affairs, Alaska Academy of Model Aeronautics, Wasilla, Alaska, said he grew up in Fairbanks and had been a model airplane enthusiast for as far back as he can remember. He said the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) has been around for almost 80 years. It is a community-based organization that has been self-regulating and self-insured. It provides insurance for property owners and for the pilots. Its rules and regulations have evolved over the 80-year period.

He said the Wright Brothers belonged to a model aviation group before they flew real-size airplanes and they set the standards. The difference between model aircraft and drones comes down to basically if you are getting paid for flying them or not. The technology is so affordable that the question becomes one of operation safety and guidelines.

He said model aviation operates at assigned flying fields within line of sight and has had its own code of safety and conduct for a long time, while the FAA is working through regulations for beyond line of sight professional use for a fee. So, this is an opportunity to clearly put their best foot forward.

MR. COLLIGAN held up a "Know Before You Fly" brochure that was put out in cooperation with the Academy of Model Aeronautics, Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) (the association for professional drone operators), the small Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) coalition and the FAA. He said it's more than a full-time job to keep up with the regulations and bureaucracy and this is a one-portal access for users, professional or recreational, to find out what the current regulations are and understand the process.

[1:08:30 PM](#)

Three weeks ago the FAA released notice of proposed rule-making (NPRM) that allows for a favorable operation, but it's not the law of the land at the moment. So, all of them, including the Unmanned Aerial Systems Task Force, must work to provide education.

MR. COLLIGAN said the little white drone that crashed on the White House lawn, for instance, was an off-the-shelf product that had some distinct modifications. The reality is that there are 15,000 of them a month coming onto U.S. shores and the more news about them the more excitement is created.

Today he was asking the legislature to help them set forth best practices, so Alaska can put its logo on this national site. He said the Academy of Model Aeronautics has over 200,000 members nationwide.

[1:10:57 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP said the resolution only mentions one person from the State of Alaska, UA President Gamble, and asked if he felt anyone else in the state should be included.

[1:11:32 PM](#)

MR. COLLIGAN said that the Task Force is made up of representatives from Homeland Security and affected departments - the state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Department of Natural Resources (that will eventually be users in the mapping industry) - and so adding them wouldn't be necessary.

CHAIR MICCICHE, finding no further questions, thanked him for his testimony.

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RO BAILEY, Director, UAF test site, Fairbanks, Alaska, supported HJR 5. She said the AMA is an important group for those who eventually move into the commercial and scientific side of using drones, but it's also an important group for helping provide some guidelines and some assistance to those who would like to do the right thing, but have no other way to find out.

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REPRESENTATIVE SHELLEY HUGHES, sponsor of HJR 5, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, commented that typically when the legislature recognizes an organization it's through a citation, because it is wonderful. They think the academy is wonderful, but the reason for using a resolution to recognize it is because it's very important that the casual recreational users know what the safety rules are so the skies are safe. Incidents have happened when someone flew a drone in a place that would not be safe (near people or the vicinity of manned aircraft) and she didn't want a tragic accident to bring this to the attention of Alaskans. This resolution is a much better way to try to avoid any incident like that.

She also pointed out that Alaskadrones.org is a resource for those recreational user guidelines.

CHAIR MICCICHE, finding no further questions, closed public testimony.

SENATOR BISHOP moved to report CSHJR 5(TRA) from committee with individual recommendations and attached zero fiscal note. There were no objections and it was so ordered.

[1:16:28 PM](#)

At ease from 1:16 to 1:17 p.m.

**SB 66-PASSENGER & REC. VEHICLE RENTAL TAX**

[1:17:34 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced SB 66 to be up for consideration.

[1:17:43 PM](#)

FORREST WOLFE, staff to Senator Giessel, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 66 for the sponsor saying that this bill seeks to clarify legislation passed in 2003, so it is in line with the original intent.

SB 66 was held in committee.

[1:19:23 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE adjourned the Senate Transportation Committee meeting at 1:19 p.m.