

Academy of Model Aeronautics

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August 18, 2015

The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2032
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Jackson:

The Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) is a nationwide, community-based organization of more than 180,000 model aviation enthusiasts; 22,000 being residents of California. I write today on behalf of our members in opposition to California SB 142 as amended on June 30, 2015.

As originally proposed SB 142 was intended to address privacy concerns. We support your effort to protect the citizens of California's right to a reasonable expectation of privacy. AMA drafted its privacy policy in 2012 and all of our members are required to abide by that policy.

However as amended, perhaps unintentionally, SB 142 now has the potential to cause unneeded collateral harm to model aviation; an activity with a history of being a wholesome, recreational and educational family activity. Further, it potentially threatens the industry that supports the aeromodeling community.

For more than 100 years, and as one of California's largest industries, the aerospace industry has been an important source of economic support in the state by providing high-paying and high-skilled jobs.

California's universities and research community have a long history of leading the country in innovation and development in the aerospace and aviation fields. To maintain this status and to remain competitive, California will need to continue to invest heavily in STEM education; science, technology, engineering and math. A strong workforce will be needed in the future, not only to sustain but to grow the aerospace industry in the state.

Many famous aviators, including AMA Life members astronauts Neil Armstrong and Robert "Hoot" Gibson, and aerospace pioneer Burt Rutan point to model aviation as the gateway to their interest in aviation and subsequent careers. In support of this, the Academy of Model Aeronautics is involved in numerous science, technology, engineering and mathematics projects through its education department, clubs, and program partners.

Model aviation is more than a hobby. It's an effective tool for inspiring young people to explore careers in the scientific and technological fields that are increasingly vital to our future. During the Apollo Space Program in the 1970s the average age of a NASA engineer was in the mid to late twenties. The average age of an aerospace engineer today is in the mid-fifties. At a time when the United States so desperately needs to create a pipeline that will fill the need for our

country's next generation of engineers and aviators, let's not place onerous and unnecessary government restrictions on the one activity that can easily help fill that void.

As written, SB 142 puts at risk and exposes recreational model aviation enthusiasts, as well as students learning through model aviation to potential law suits and civil penalties for even an inadvertent excursion over the property of a neighbor that borders their flying field, schoolyard, park, or even their backyard.

SB 142 will only serve to undermine an outstanding sport and hobby and will discourage young people from becoming involved in this meaningful activity, either for fun or as a career path, for fear of repercussions from an inadvertent act.

The irony is that as originally written SB 142 was interpreted to address privacy concerns. As amended SB 142 will impact all small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS), including recreational model aircraft, even those without the capability to capture images or video.

The AMA submits that, as amended, SB 142 will not address the original question and will only serve to negatively impact the model aircraft community that boasts an 80 year history of safe, responsible flying. A community that has served and will continue to serve the one industry so vital to the United States in maintaining its role as world leader in the field of aerospace and aviation.

Sincerely,



Dave Mathewson
Executive Director
Academy of Model Aeronautics

cc: Senate Floor Analysis Unit, Office of the Secretary of the Senate
Assembly Floor Analysis Unit, Office of the Chief Clerk
Dana Williamson, Office of the Governor