

Submitter: Donald Backman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB238

Oregon House Judiciary

RE: SB 238A, a bill to allow police and sheriffs to use drones for surveillance and spying in many situations, without warrants, which means without court oversight.

Oregon House Judiciary:

I am writing to oppose SB 238A. As a Part 107 FAA licensed drone pilot, this proposal to allow warrantless surveillance deeply concerns me. The commercial drone pilot industry is already under attack across the nation by uninformed members of the public because many assume every drone is somehow observing and recording them. This leads to incidents of drone operators being verbally assaulted and drones literally shot down. One state currently has legislation pending that could allow the public to shoot down drones.

Drones allow a degree of surveillance that is unparalleled. Under this bill, any small-town police officer could record public activities such as exercising the freedom to assemble and freedom of speech. Such a video can be quickly weaponized. Oregon already has towns where the local law enforcement, often the sheriff, already believes they are the law unto themselves. Some of these law enforcement folks have a track record of intolerance for constitutional rights. In this era of widespread public dissent, allowing warrantless surveillance is not just a bad idea, it can allow illegal tracking of the fully legal protests happening in many Oregon communities.

Emergency personnel can already use drones in emergency situations. For example, local fire departments can operate their drones in a search and rescue situation.

I encourage you to reject this bill.

Don Backman
FAA-licensed commercial drone pilot