

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor Chuck Washington

SUBMITTAL DATE: July 16, 2015

SUBJECT: Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2015, H.R. 3025 (Cook), which would institute a criminal penalty on anyone who launches a drone that interferes with fighting wildfires on federal property.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors Support H.R. 3025 – Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2015 and direct the Executive Office to notify Congress of the Board’s action.

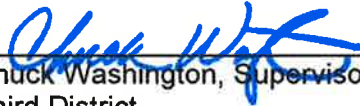
BACKGROUND:

The use of drones is expanding nationwide, but our laws have fallen behind and need to catch up with the technology. The Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2015 would make it a federal offense to launch a drone that interferes with fighting wildfires on federal property. Firefighters and other first responders who use drones for aerial firefighting would be exempted. Anyone convicted under the Act would face a fine and imprisonment for up to five years. Just this month, two wildfires within the region have had aerial operations suspended when a drone flew into airspace over the fire. This was due to the threat the drone posed to low-flying planes. Additionally, the suspension of air operations threatened the lives of firefighters and homes in the area.

Under federal law, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) could levy fines for violating a “temporary flight restriction,” but there would be no criminal penalty. Currently, there is no federal law providing criminal penalties for this problem; the closest thing is violations of “national defense airspace,” but criminal penalties would not apply.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

Passage of H.R. 3025 would enhance public safety by limiting the airspace on federal lands during wildland fire events.



Chuck Washington, Supervisor
Third District

CW:vc
Attachment

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SUPERVISOR CHUCK WASHINGTON THIRD DISTRICT

July 15, 2015

The Honorable Paul Cook, Congressman
District 8, U.S. House of Representatives
1222 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cook,

Thank you for your good work in Congress, particularly on those issues that keep our Riverside County residents safe and insure their protection from unnecessary harm.

I write you today in specific support of your proposed "Wildfire Airspace Protection Act of 2015", H.R. 3025. As you are aware, there have been several significant reports of private drones being operated over live wildfire airspace in some recent fires. These incidents have created very dangerous flight conditions for fire attack aviators of both fixed wing and water dropping helicopters causing some airborne fire attack operations to be halted.

As a 25 year pilot for Delta Airlines, and a retired Navy pilot, I clearly understand the serious danger to pilots, ground crews, ground structures and residents posed by the indiscriminate operation of these drones over wildfire airspace.

I support HR 3025, which will impose restrictions on the operation of drones over federal wildfire airspace, and commend you for bringing forward responsible legislation to address this issue and for being responsive to the threats posed by this activity.

I am also asking that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors unitedly take action in support of your legislation in a cause to bring additional safety measures to our wildfire attack efforts.

Warm regards,

Chuck Washington
Riverside County Supervisor
Third District