

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2013

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HOUSE DRH30162-ML-83 (02/12)

Short Title: Preserving Privacy Act of 2013. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Setzer, Moffitt, D. Hall, and Harrison (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO REGULATE THE USE OF DRONES TO CONDUCT SEARCHES.  
3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known as the "Preserving Privacy Act of 2013."

5 **SECTION 2.** Article 10 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes is amended by  
6 adding a new section to read:

7 "**§ 15A-232. Searches using a drone.**

8 (a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

9 (1) Drone. – Any powered aerial vehicle that (i) does not carry a human  
10 operator, (ii) can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely, and (iii) is  
11 expendable or recoverable.

12 (2) Person. – Any employee or agent of the United States or any state or any  
13 political subdivision thereof and any individual, partnership, association,  
14 business establishment, or any other legal or commercial entity.

15 (3) Search warrant. – As defined in G.S. 15A-241.

16 (b) Prohibition. – Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, it shall be  
17 unlawful for any person or municipal, county, or State law enforcement agency to use a drone  
18 for the purpose of gathering evidence or other information or data pertaining to criminal  
19 conduct or conduct in violation of a statute or rule. A person or municipal, county, or State law  
20 enforcement agency may use a drone for purposes other than gathering evidence or other  
21 information or data pertaining to criminal conduct or conduct in violation of a statute or rule,  
22 but any information or data acquired from the use of the drone shall not be disclosed and shall  
23 be inadmissible in any criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding.

24 (c) Exceptions. – The prohibition in subsection (b) of this section shall not apply to the  
25 following:

26 (1) A municipal, county, or State law enforcement agency using a drone to  
27 conduct a search pursuant to a search warrant. Any search authorized under  
28 this subdivision shall be limited to the scope of the warrant, and the warrant  
29 shall specifically state that the use of a drone is authorized.

30 (2) A municipal, county, or State law enforcement agency using a drone to  
31 conduct a search if consent to the search is given in accordance with Article  
32 9 of this Chapter.

33 (3) A municipal, county, or State law enforcement agency using a drone to  
34 conduct a search if the law enforcement agency possesses reasonable  
35 suspicion that immediate action is needed to prevent (i) imminent harm to  
36 life, (ii) serious damage to property, (iii) the imminent escape of a suspect,



1           or (iv) the imminent destruction of evidence. The use of a drone pursuant to  
2           this subdivision is subject to the following limitations:

3           a.       The search shall be documented, including the factual basis for  
4           possessing reasonable suspicion that immediate action was needed to  
5           prevent (i) imminent harm to life, (ii) serious damage to property,  
6           (iii) the imminent escape of a suspect, or (iv) the imminent  
7           destruction of evidence.

8           b.       No later than 48 hours after the date on which a municipal, county, or  
9           State law enforcement agency uses a drone to conduct a search, a  
10           supervisory official with the law enforcement agency shall file a  
11           sworn statement with the clerk of court in the county in which the  
12           drone was used setting forth the information required in  
13           sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision.

14           (d)     Scope of Search. – When a drone is used pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, it  
15           shall be operated in a manner to collect information or data only on the person or location  
16           subject to the search and to avoid information or data collection on individuals, homes, or areas  
17           other than the subject of the search. Neither facial recognition nor other biometric matching  
18           technology may be used on information or data collected from the use of a drone that pertains  
19           to individuals, homes, or areas other than the subject of the search.

20           (e)     Penalties – An aggrieved party may bring a civil action against any person who  
21           violates the provisions of this section. Any person who willfully and knowingly violates  
22           subsection (b) of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Any person who violates  
23           subsection (g) of this section is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

24           (f)     Suppression. – Any information or data obtained or collected in violation of this  
25           section shall not be admissible as evidence in any criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding.

26           (g)     Data Retention. – Any information or data willfully and knowingly obtained or  
27           collected in violation of this section shall be destroyed within 24 hours after the date on which  
28           the information or data was first obtained or collected. If a court of competent jurisdiction  
29           renders a final decision finding that information or data was obtained or collected in violation  
30           of this section, the information or data obtained or collected in violation of this section shall be  
31           destroyed within 24 hours after the date of the final decision.

32           (h)     Reporting Requirement. – By January 31 of each year, any official listed in  
33           G.S. 15A-243 who issues a search warrant during the preceding calendar year authorizing the  
34           use of a drone shall report to the Administrative Office of the Courts the identity of the law  
35           enforcement agency to which the search warrant was issued, the offense specified in the  
36           warrant, and the nature of the facilities or property searched.

37           Beginning April 1, 2014, and every year thereafter, the Administrative Office of the Courts  
38           shall report to the General Assembly the information received pursuant to this subsection. The  
39           Administrative Office of the Courts shall adopt rules governing the content and form of the  
40           report required by this subsection and shall publish on its Web site any part of the report that is  
41           a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes."

42           **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2013, and applies to  
43           offenses committed on or after that date.