
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 231

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT UNITS AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to administer a grant program for law enforcement units and municipal and volunteer fire departments to buy unmanned aerial vehicles (i.e., drones). The department must do this within available appropriations, starting in FY 25 and each fiscal year after.

Under the bill, DESPP must develop the program's eligibility criteria, application forms, and deadlines by October 1, 2024, and post them along with a description of the program on the department's website.

DESPP must also annually report, starting by January 1, 2026, to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the program. The report must include information for the previous calendar year on (1) the number of grant applications that were received and awarded and (2) a list of law enforcement units and municipal and volunteer fire departments that got grants.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Law Enforcement Unit

By law, a "law enforcement unit" is any state or municipal agency or department (or tribal agency or department created and governed under a memorandum of agreement) whose primary functions include enforcing criminal or traffic laws; preserving public order; protecting life and property; or preventing, detecting, or investigating crime (CGS § 7-294a(8)).

Related Bill

sSB 3, favorably reported by the General Law Committee, among other things, prohibits public entities (including police and fire departments) from operating drones assembled or manufactured by certain foreign entities (e.g., China and Russia) starting October 1, 2025.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 23 Nay 0 (03/12/2024)