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114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 387

To require the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to use the definitions in section 40125 of title 49, United States Code, in determining whether an unmanned aircraft conducting aeronautical research flights qualifies for public aircraft status under that section, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 5, 2015

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. HEITKAMP) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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A BILL

To require the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to use the definitions in section 40125 of title 49, United States Code, in determining whether an unmanned aircraft conducting aeronautical research flights qualifies for public aircraft status under that section, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Safe Skies for Unmanned Aircraft Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. PUBLIC AIRCRAFT OPERATING STATUS OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT USED IN AERONAUTICAL RESEARCH FLIGHTS; SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR SUCH FLIGHTS.

(a) PUBLIC AIRCRAFT OPERATING STATUS.—In determining whether an unmanned aircraft used in the conduct of aeronautical research qualifies as a public aircraft under section 40125 of title 49, United States Code, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall—

(1) for purposes of determining whether the aircraft is used for a commercial purpose, use only the definition given that term in subsection (a) of such section; and

(2) for purposes of determining whether the aircraft, including airborne platforms and systems, is used for aeronautical research and platform-based research, include atmospheric and natural resources research, meteorological observation, and airborne astronomy as aeronautical research.

(b) PROCEDURES FOR BEYOND-LINE-OF-SIGHT OPERATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall develop and implement procedures for safe, beyond-line-of-sight operations in the national

airspace system by unmanned aircraft conducting aeronautical research.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPROVAL.—In developing the procedures required by paragraph (1) relating to beyond-line-of-sight operations by unmanned aircraft described in that paragraph, the Administrator shall ensure that a decision to approve such an operation takes into consideration the safety of the entire operation, including whether any provisions required to be included in the certificate of authorization for the operation result in additional safety risk to any individual associated with the operation.

(c) UNMANNED AIRCRAFT DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''unmanned aircraft'' has the meaning given that term in section 331 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–95; 49 U.S.C. 40101 note).

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