

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2025 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **Senate Bill 721**

By Senator Hamilton

[Introduced March 6, 2025; referred  
to the Committee on Natural Resources; and then to  
the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §20-2-5j and §61-10-34 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as  
 2 amended, relating to authorizing the use of unmanned aerial vehicles and dogs while  
 3 hunting and describing their administration; adding to the definition of "critical  
 4 infrastructure" certain licensed or commercial livestock and poultry facilities to protect them  
 5 from unauthorized unmanned aerial vehicle surveillance or attack; and providing criminal  
 6 penalties for damage to critical infrastructure or farm lands with fences, livestock, or  
 7 agriculture land or crops, whether operated as a for-profit business or not-for-profit  
 8 farming.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

## CHAPTER 20. NATURAL RESOURCES.

### ARTICLE 2. WILDLIFE RESOURCES.

#### Part I. Wildlife Management.

**§20-2-5j. Leashed dogs and/or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for tracking or locating mortally  
 wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear.**

1 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, a person who is legally  
 2 hunting and reasonably believes he or she has mortally wounded a deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or  
 3 bear may use a leashed dogs dog and/or a Unmanned Aerial Vehicles(hereafter "UAV") as defined  
 4 in §61-16-1(3) of this code. to track and locate the mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or  
 5 bear. The hunter is also permitted to use a dog handler of a leashed dogs dog and/or a licensed  
 6 UAV operator to track and locate the mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear. The  
 7 hunter or the dog handler shall always maintain physical control of the leashed dogs dog. Only one  
 8 leashed dog per handler may be used and, if the hunter is using a dog handler, the hunter may not  
 9 handle additional dogs for the handler.

10 (b) The act of tracking a mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear with a dog, or  
 11 locating with a UAV, is hunting and the hunter, and handler, or licensed UAV operator are subject to

all applicable laws and rules. It is unlawful for a hunter, licensed UAV operator, or dog handler to track or locate deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear with leashed dogs or a UAV under the provisions of this section unless he or she is in possession of a valid hunting license issued pursuant to this article or is a person excepted from licensing requirements pursuant to this article, and all other lawful authorizations as prescribed in this article. The hunter shall accompany the dog handler and only the hunter may kill a mortally wounded deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear. However, any hunter who is physically unable to accompany the handler in the tracking and locating of the mortally wounded deer, elk, wild turkey, boar, or bear may designate the handler to kill the deer, elk, wild turkey, boar, or bear when located by the handler. The deer, elk, turkey, wild boar, or bear shall count toward the bag limit of the hunter who fired the initial shot.

(c) Any dog handler or any UAV operator providing tracking services for profit must be licensed as an outfitter or guide pursuant to §20-2-23 of this code. Any UAV operator not operating on property they own or lease shall be licensed according to FAA Part 107. The Director shall provide a list of licensed dog handlers and UAV operators to the public prior to September 1st of each year.

(d) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, any dog handler or UAV operator, using an unmanned aerial vehicle as permitted in this section, is guilty of a misdemeanor as provided for in §61-10-34 of this code, if the unmanned aerial vehicle is used in any manner that results in or causes structural damage or destruction to fences, crops, farm lands, forest land, or a critical infrastructure asset or to any farm lands with fences, livestock, or agriculture land, or crops, whether operated as a for-profit business or not for-profit farming.

## **CHAPTER 61. CRIMES AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.**

### **ARTICLE 10. CRIMES AGAINST PUBLIC POLICY.**

**§61-10-34. Critical Infrastructure Protection Act; prohibiting certain acts, including trespass and conspiracy to trespass against property designated a critical**

**infrastructure facility; criminal penalties; and civil action.**

(a) This section may be referred to as the "West Virginia Critical Infrastructure Protection Act".

(b) For purposes of this section:

"Critical Infrastructure" means systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States of America or the State of West Virginia that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, state economic security, national public health or safety, state public health or safety, or any combination of those matters, whether such systems or assets are in operation or are under any state of construction.

"Critical infrastructure facility" means one of the following:

- (1) A petroleum or alumina refinery;
- (2) An electrical power generating facility, substation, switching station, electrical control center or electric power lines, and associated equipment infrastructure;
- (3) A chemical, polymer, or rubber manufacturing facility;
- (4) A water intake structure, water treatment facility, wastewater treatment plant, or pump station;
- (5) A natural gas compressor station;
- (6) A liquid natural gas terminal or storage facility;
- (7) Wireline and wireless telecommunications infrastructure;
- (8) A port, railroad switching yard, trucking terminal, or other freight transportation facility;
- (9) A gas processing plant, including a plant used in the processing, treatment, or fractionation of natural gas or natural gas liquids;
- (10) A transmission facility used by a federally licensed radio or television station;
- (11) A steelmaking facility that uses an electric arc furnace to make steel;
- (12) A facility identified and regulated by the United States Department of Homeland

Security Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program;

(13) A dam that is regulated by the state or federal government;

(14) A natural gas distribution utility facility including, but not limited to, pipeline interconnections, a city gate or town border station, metering station, below- or above-ground pipeline or piping and truck loading or offloading facility, a natural gas storage facility, a natural gas transmission facility, or a natural gas utility distribution facility;

(15) A crude oil or refined products storage and distribution facility including, but not limited to, valve sites, pipeline interconnections, pump station, metering station, below- or above-ground pipeline or piping, and truck loading or offloading facility;

(16) Military facilities, including national guard facilities and equipment storage areas where non-military personnel are prohibited;

(17) Department of Highways facilities and locations near or on roads or highways where the public is prohibited;

(18) Health care facilities;

(19) Any above-ground portion of an oil, gas, hazardous liquid, or chemical pipeline, tank, or other storage facility that is enclosed by a fence, other physical barrier, or is clearly marked with signs prohibiting trespassing that are obviously designed to exclude intruders;

(20) A commercial service airport as defined by the Federal Aviation Administration;

(21) Any nuclear reactor and its associated components including, but not limited to, components related to modular or microreactors, cooling technologies, sensors, instrumentation, or storage involved in training or research opportunities; or

(22) Any licensed livestock stockyard facility; any licensed livestock slaughter facility; or any commercial poultry production and processing facility;

(23) Any farm lands with fences, livestock, or agriculture land as defined in §19-19-2 of this code, or crops, whether operated as a for-profit business or not for-profit farming; or

~~(22)~~(24) The hardware, software, or other digital property of any critical infrastructure

52 facility listed in this subsection.

53 (c)(1) Any person who willfully and knowingly trespasses or enters property containing a  
54 critical infrastructure facility without permission by the owner of the property or lawful occupant  
55 thereof is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not  
56 less than \$250 nor more than \$1,000, or confined in jail not less than 30 days nor more than one  
57 year, or both fined and confined. If the intent of the trespasser is to willfully damage, destroy,  
58 vandalize, deface, tamper with the physical or digital equipment, or impede or inhibit operations of  
59 the critical infrastructure facility, the person is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction  
60 thereof, shall be fined not less than \$100 nor more than \$1,000, or confined in a jail for not more  
61 than one year, or both fined and confined.

62 (2) (A) Any person who willfully damages, destroys, vandalizes, defaces, or tampers with  
63 the physical or digital equipment in a critical infrastructure facility causing damage, including  
64 damage inflicted by cyber-attack or digital interference in excess of \$2,500 is guilty of a felony and,  
65 upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$3,000 nor more than \$10,000, or imprisoned  
66 in a state correctional facility for a term of not less than one year nor more than five years, or both  
67 fined and imprisoned.

68 (B) Any person convicted of a second offense under the provisions of this subdivision is  
69 guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$10,000 nor more than  
70 \$15,000, or imprisoned in a state correctional facility for a term of not less than two years nor more  
71 than 10 years, or both fined and imprisoned.

72 (3) Any person who conspires with any person to commit the offense of trespass against a  
73 critical infrastructure facility in violation of subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of this section and the  
74 trespass actually occurs is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in  
75 an amount of not less than \$250 nor more than \$1,000. Any person who conspires with any  
76 person to willfully damage, destroy, vandalize, deface, or tamper with equipment in a critical  
77 infrastructure facility and the damage, destruction, vandalization, defacing, or tampering causes

78 damage, including damage inflicted by cyber-attack or digital interference in excess of \$2,500 is  
79 guilty of a felony and, shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not less than \$3,000 nor more than  
80 \$10,000.

81 (d)(1) Any person who is arrested for or convicted of an offense under this section may be  
82 held civilly liable for any damages to personal or real property while trespassing, in addition to the  
83 penalties imposed by this section.

84 (2) Any person or entity that compensates, provides consideration to, or remunerates a  
85 person for trespassing as described in subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of this section may also be  
86 held liable for damages to personal or real property committed by the person compensated or  
87 remunerated for trespassing.

88 (e) A person who buys or receives from another person, aids in concealing, transfers to a  
89 person other than the owner thereof, or possesses any stolen goods or other thing of value from a  
90 critical infrastructure facility, which he or she knows or has reason to believe has been stolen from  
91 a critical infrastructure facility, is guilty of larceny, and may be prosecuted although the principal  
92 offender has not been convicted: *Provided*, That possession of stolen goods from a critical  
93 infrastructure facility while acting at the request of law enforcement or in cooperation with law  
94 enforcement does not constitute a violation of this section. Any person convicted of an offense  
95 under this subsection, in addition the criminal penalties imposed for larceny, is liable to the critical  
96 infrastructure facility owner for compensatory damages and, in addition, for punitive damages in  
97 an amount not less than three times the amount of the compensatory damages.

98 (f) The provisions of §61-10-34(c)(1) of this code do not apply to any person or  
99 organization:

100 (1) Monitoring or attentive to compliance with public or worker safety laws, or, wage and  
101 hour requirements;

102 (2) Picketing at the workplace that is otherwise lawful and arises out of a bona fide labor  
103 dispute, including any controversy concerning wages, salaries, hours, working conditions, or

benefits, including health and welfare, sick leave, insurance, and pension or retirement provisions, the managing or maintenance of collective bargaining agreements, and the terms to be included in those agreements; or

(3) Engaging in union organizing or recruitment activities, including attempting to reach workers verbally, in writing with pamphlets, and investigation of non-union working conditions, or both.

(g) The provisions of this section do not apply to:

(1) The right to free speech or assembly including, but not limited to, protesting and picketing; or

(2) A contractor who has a contractual relationship with a critical infrastructure facility and the contractor's employees are acting within their scope of employment performing work at a critical infrastructure facility.

(h)(1) All items of personal property which are used, have been used, or are intended for use in perpetration of theft or damage to infrastructure are subject to forfeiture.

(2) The items of personal property subject to forfeiture include all conveyances, including aircraft, vehicles, or vessels, except that:

(A) A conveyance used by any person as a common carrier in the transaction of business as a common carrier may not be forfeited under this section unless it appears that the person owning the conveyance is a consenting party or privy to a violation of this section;

(B) A conveyance may not be forfeited under the provisions of this article, unless the state proves by a preponderance of the evidence that the person owning the conveyance knew, or had reason to know, that the conveyance was being employed or was likely to be employed in a violation of this section; and

(C) A bona fide security interest or other valid lien in any conveyance may not be forfeited under the provisions of this article, unless the state proves by a preponderance of the evidence that the holder of the security interest or lien either knew, or had reason to know, that the



- 130 conveyance was being used or was likely to be used in a violation of this section.
- 131 (3) All procedures relating to the seizure and disposition of property subject to forfeiture
- 132 under the authority of this section are governed by the applicable provisions of the West Virginia
- 133 Contraband Forfeiture Act, §60A-7-701 *et seq.* of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and dogs while hunting; to add to the definition of "critical infrastructure" certain licensed or commercial livestock and poultry facilities to protect them from unauthorized Unmanned Aerial Vehicle surveillance or attack; and to provide criminal penalties for damage to critical infrastructure or farm lands with fences, livestock, or agriculture land or crops, whether operated as a for-profit business or not for-profit farming.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.