

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs
For HB 41

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Hearing Date: April 2, 2025 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Rebekah Warwick, Texas State Director
Heritage Action for America
Mansfield, TX

My name is Rebekah Warwick and I represent Heritage Action for America, a national grassroots organization with two million conservative activists nationwide, including thousands of Texans.

Heritage Action supports House Bill 41, authored by Rep. Hefner.

State governments can't afford to rely perpetually on foreign adversary-produced drone aircraft for law enforcement, public safety, emergency response, and other government uses. HB41 is sound policy that lays out an enforceable roadmap to end this dangerous reliance on foreign adversary-produced equipment, without forcing a sudden divestment that would leave first responders with capability gaps.

Heritage Action urges you to support House Bill 41 and favorably pass the bill.

Rebekah Warwick
Texas State Director
Heritage Action for America

Larry Boggus
Memorial Villages PD
Magnolia, TX

HB41 and the banning of Chinese manufactured UAS. Cost effectiveness, quality of product and lack of comparable USA (blue) companies that are trying to be required but simply don't compare.

MVPD uses drones as first responders (DFR) along with a BVLOS waiver for the past 5 years to assist in relaying critical information to officers prior to arrival and maintain overwatch for safety of the officer after their arrival. As it stands today, integration into automatic flights does not exist in an affordable areas with USA branded drones. This along with proper sensors (cameras), dock housing and trust does not exist.

There are several companies out there that are 100% USA made but not to these standards.

This along with everything we carry (from iPhones to Androids, pagers, vehicle tracking, radio equipment and so on simply does not exist without data and/or something made by foreign industries.

Data tracking, if this truly is a concern, what are we actually hiding. As required by the FAA and Texas law, all LEO agencies utilizing drones for response must post their flights publicly. So data tracking shouldn't be an issue no more than us posting flights. They would already know. This along with use of aircraft for mapping, helicopters for photos, wouldn't it be the same thing because everything is connected and visible in theory.

I trust that Texas recognizes all the critical first responders are utilizing DFR for service calls and this bill would effectively kill these programs based mostly on cost and then nothing comparable. We would be going backwards to move forward.

Thank you for your time,
Larry Boggus
Officer / UAS Pilot
Memorial Villages PD
Houston, Texas 77024

Garrett Banes, Patrol supervisor
Self/ Police Department
Canyon, TX

This bill will intentionally or unintentionally hinder almost every single agency in Texas with not only apprehending criminals both violent and non violent, but hinder the searching and recovery of elderly, and children that are missing/ endangered, along with medical emergencies. I as a seasoned patrol supervisor have seen this FIRST hand MANY times, where without the use of the drones this bill aims to prevent usage of... criminals, and lost/ endangered human beings would have never been found. Over the years, I have become very familiar with drones and their manufacturers/ parts. The simple facts of this are... even the "American made drones" are not that. They have parts made in China etc. they do this because the cold hard facts is China etc makes MUCH better products than America does. This bill is not about China vs American made. If it was... the "American made" drones would be looked into and found that they are in fact... not. Deeming them not- useable either. This bill is a manufacturer war. As a police officer, supervisor, and CITIZEN, I want the BEST product, regardless of where it comes from. For instance. I train and specialize in police canines. 90% of these dogs are imported, and will always be. Do we get rid of those next? Start finding dogs at the pound since they're "American made"? No. We get the BEST. I pray and hope that the people wake up and realize how much these drones have ALREADY accomplished. If it had something to do with information China can get from our drones then why do we continue to have iPhones? They can get all the info and more that they need from them. Please, I encourage you to do the right thing. Sincerely, Cpl. Garrett Banes.

Terrance Chaney
Self, law enforcement
Junction, TX

Law enforcement being able to use DJI drones, one of the best companies in the business, is a necessity. They help many agencies across the state and could help many more. Removing the option would hurt the safety and security of the state and its citizens.

Alexander Wulfekammer, Sgt.
Canyon Police Department.
Canyon, TX

This bill will drastically decrease the effectiveness of Law enforcement agencies. As a current drone operator for the City of Canyon Police Department, DJI and Autel are the most up to date drones allowing us be the most effective when it comes to operations utilizing them. With how big both companies are, it allows for customer service and support. We utilize the drones for multiple scenarios throughout the year and in our day to day operations. These drones that this ill is attempting to ban will set us back tremendously with our drone program and how it operates. We have already spent multiple years working on building up our drone program along with it being utilized to assist our crash investigation team. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michael Belsick
Fredericksburg Tea Party
Fredericksburg, TX

I am FOR HB 41 which is also very similar to HB 17 and HB 34.

Ricky Pena
Self
College Station, TX

Plain and simple. This bill will KILL UAS programs for public safety in the state. Hundreds of programs will be shut down and the residents of this state will lose a valuable resource. The "justification" behind this HB is 100% false and there are ways we can be secure and still use these foreign items. I wish American made products were up to par. They are not and the subpar products that are our there cost way too much to be sustainable. This bill will be responsible for a less safe state.

Alton Glenn Trubee
Travis County ESD No. 6 / Lake Travis Fire Rescue - Asst. Fire Chief / Fire Marshal
Lakeway, TX

Travis County ESD No. 6 / Lake Travis Fire Rescue is against this bill. This bill would cause more than 400 drone programs to be prohibited from providing the vital service that our constituents need to ensure their safety and well-being. This would bill would affect almost all public safety UAS programs from Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management. The grant funding only outlines funding for law enforcement, and not any other public safety agency. For these reason Travis County ESD No. 6 / Lake Travis Fire Rescue is against this bill as currently written.

Nick McGregor, Sergeant Investigator
Cooke County Sheriff's Office
Gainesville, TX

This bill is unnecessary and creates undue hardship for a small rural law enforcement agency. The costs are exponentially higher and for less technological advancement.

Bruce Baker II, Fire Chief (Ret.)

DJI Technologies

Cleburne, TX

TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD OF “CHIEF” WAYNE BAKER

DIRECTOR OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

DJI TECHNOLOGIES

Texas House of Representatives

Committee on Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs

April 2, 2025

Chair Hefner, Vice Chair Lopez, and members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony for today’s hearing on HB 41, which relates to the acquisition of drones by governmental entities in Texas. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of DJI, the world’s leading manufacturer of consumer and commercial drones.

I come to this issue with a unique perspective. Not only am I DJI’s Director of Stakeholder Engagement, a role that allows me to work directly with public safety officials around the country who have embraced drone technology, but I am also a paramedic and 26-year veteran of the fire service. I am also the former Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator for the City of Joshua. This means that I have watched the evolution of drones from a popular Christmas gift for hobbyists to an indispensable tool to help our first responders save lives.

My story with drones began in 2011, when I assisted with Texas wildfires as part of a Texas Department of Emergency Management Incident Management Team. It was during the Possum Kingdom Lake fire and other large wildfires that I discovered how drones could change the game. I knew I could have greater situational awareness than ever before to save the lives and property of the Texans I had sworn to protect. We first used drones for that wildfire situational awareness, but as DJI’s technology evolved, we were even able to deliver things such as life jackets in water rescues, which we used successfully during devastating floods in North Texas in 2015. Not only did this incredible moment captivate the world, but it also caught DJI’s attention, and we later worked together to innovate new drones that were specifically designed with public safety use in mind and with features that would save lives in emergencies.

Since then, Texas has become a leader in public safety drone use. Collaborative efforts such as the North Texas Public Safety Unmanned Response Team (PSURT) in the Dallas area, CapCog PSURT Team in the Austin area, and the Gulf Coast PSURT Team in the Houston area have brought together public safety departments regionally when time is of the essence – most notably during Hurricane Harvey.

When I retired from the fire service, I went to work for DJI because I wanted to continue my life’s work of making the world a safer place. Today, I continue to support public safety agencies building drone programs across the country, and I do so as a Texan looking to help make a difference in our state, our nation, and our world. These drones quite literally can mean the difference between life and death. For example, the Arlington Police Department has used drones to assess dangerous situations before sending in armed units, de-escalating dangerous situations for the

Travis Calendine

Self/ Public Safety UAS Program Manager/ Operator

Prosper, TX

My name is Travis Calendine, and I am a public safety drone pilot. I am submitting this testimony to respectfully oppose House Bill 41.

Every day, public safety agencies across Texas rely on drones to support lifesaving missions. In my own experience, drones have helped us locate missing persons, monitor wildfires, survey flood damage, and document serious vehicle crashes—all while keeping our personnel safe and reducing response times.

The majority of our fleet includes DJI drones, which are widely used in the public safety community due to their affordability, ease of use, and advanced capabilities. These tools are not luxuries—they are necessities.

HB 41 proposes banning state and local agencies from using drones manufactured by companies based in China, including DJI. While I understand the security concerns behind this proposal, I urge the committee to consider the following:

There is no documented case of data compromise from public safety drone use when operated under standard security protocols. We store footage locally, often fly offline, and follow strict security practices.

Replacing our DJI drones would cost tens of thousands of dollars. U.S.-based alternatives are significantly more expensive, often less capable, and may not be available in the quantities needed to support our mission.

Smaller departments, especially in rural communities, could lose their drone programs entirely if forced to comply with an immediate ban—leaving those areas without critical aerial support.

The human cost is real. A delay in response caused by the loss or absence of a drone can mean the difference between life and death.

Public safety professionals are not opposed to better security—we welcome it. But we need a balanced, practical approach. Rather than banning the most effective tools we have, let's work toward stronger data protocols, secure operating practices, and a phased transition that won't jeopardize lives or budgets.

Please consider the real-world consequences of HB 41, and the unintended harm it could cause to the very communities we serve and protect.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Travis Calendine

Public Safety UAS Operator

Tony Leal, Corporal
Lubbock Police Department
Lubbock, TX

Banning Texas law enforcement agencies from purchasing DJI drones can have several impacts on public safety:

1. ****Reduced Operational Capability****: DJI drones are known for being cost-effective and technologically advanced. Law enforcement agencies across Texas widely use them for various tasks, such as search and rescue, tactical overwatch, traffic management, and disaster response. Without access to these drones, agencies might face limitations in quickly and effectively carrying out these operations, potentially delaying critical response times.
2. ****Increased Costs****: American-made alternatives to DJI drones are significantly more expensive or much less effective. This will lead to increased costs for law enforcement agencies, which will reduce the number of drones they can deploy or strain budgets, potentially diverting funds from other critical operations or services.
3. ****Technological Gaps****: DJI is a leader in drone technology, offering features such as reliable GPS, high-quality cameras, AI, and advanced flight capabilities at no added cost. Transitioning to other brands could result in a technological gap, during which law enforcement operatives will not have access to drones of similar capability and reliability.
4. ****Training and Adaptation****: Agencies have invested time (which, for me, is equivalent to almost ten years) and resources in training personnel to use DJI systems. A switch to another brand would require new training, leading to a reduction in operational effectiveness and increased expenditures on training programs.
5. ****Public Perception and Trust****: Public safety depends not only on effective operations but also on maintaining public trust. Disruptions or perceived reductions in capability could affect community confidence in law enforcement's ability to manage emergencies efficiently.

Overall, it's important for agencies to ensure they have access to the most effective technology to mitigate any negative impacts on public safety. This ban would be catastrophic to a large majority, if not all, law enforcement drone units across our great state. I am a proud American and an even prouder Texan. I would love to operate a Texas-made drone to protect my city, but we're not there yet. Instead of a ban, let's discuss our needs and find a way to build it. I've been with Lubbock PD for a little over 20 years, and I'd love to help in any way I can. We have some of the brightest minds on Earth, living right here in Texas, sending people to space. Why can't we design and build a reliable, effective, technologically advanced drone for public safety use?

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Tony Leal

Lance Anderson
Self/Peace Officer and Drone Coordinator for Department
Spring, TX

Greetings,

Please consider speaking to governmental users of these drones. Please consider the following:

1-the federal government has passed a bill to investigate the implications of DJI drones in regards to national security within a year. It would be prudent and reasonable to wait until their study is complete before grounding thousands of drones on circumstantial speculations.

2-if you do ban something, ban the software. My department uses dronesense, which severs the connections between DJI software and the drone and replaces it with American made software. A dji drone essentially has the same internal chips/circuitry as an iPhone or an Android. Be smart and ban the software, not the hardware.

3-consider what could China possibly gain from the general usage flights of residential neighborhoods while searching for a suspect or surveying damage after a disaster?

Guadalupe Casanova, Officer

Self - Public Safety

Brownsville, TX

I want to take this opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill. As my colleagues in public safety mentioned, forcing public safety organizations to replace the most capable and often most affordable unmanned aircraft systems without comparable equipment would be devastating, particularly to local governments where budgetary constraints often mean that American-manufactured drones are unattainable. Although I recognize the reasonable data security concern, I am certain that unless there is a significant increase in the grant funding that accompanies this bill, the mandate will dismantle and abandon many public safety unmanned aviation programs that cannot afford six-figure-a-year subscriptions for compliant equipment that barely measures up in capability.

Andrew McKinney

Potter County Sheriff's Office

Canyon, TX

I am with the Potter County Sheriff's Office, where I manage the drone program and regional training events. As a certified UAS instructor with experience using both U.S. and foreign-manufactured systems, I have serious concerns about this legislation as currently written.

This bill would put Texas lives at risk by severely limiting the tools available to first responders. It would create a critical gap in essential aircraft for various operations, with no viable alternatives currently available. The impact would not only hinder emergency response efforts but also jeopardize the safety of officers and other emergency personnel across the state.

I strongly urge the opportunity to collaborate on a bill that both addresses security concerns and invests in Texas-based UAS companies while ensuring first responders retain the capabilities they rely on until proven alternatives emerge. Agencies across the state have already invested in technologies that mitigate many of the concerns raised in other states. Please do not restrict Texas first responders from performing their duties effectively.

todd johnson

Self/ Retired Police officer

San Antonio, TX

You are going to force public entities to purchase an inferior tool at a price of up to 14 times higher than currently available forcing most smaller agencies to abandon the ability to have it. This affects public safety. Furthermore agencies in Texas are using third party software to prevent use of their data and protect it infrastructure from malicious intrusions. Multiple examinations of DJI products have failed to prove that there is anything to cause a security issue. This is a feel good bill for politicians to take back to their constituents and show that they are doing something to protect them when in fact it will make them far less safe during critical incidents and in the end doesn't actually do anything to safeguard against asymmetrical warfare.

Rex Kiser
Self-Police Officer
Fort Worth, TX

Hello Committee,

I would like to enter my comments on the record regarding the ban of DJI products by a governmental entity. The ban of drones in public safety will directly impact our ability to respond to calls for service that could have resulted in a positive outcome by the use of a drone. This applies to the safety of officers and civilians and the protection of property.

If forced to use drones that are made in the USA, we would only be able to have a fraction of the number of drones that we currently employ. The drones made by American companies are 3-4 times as expensive and would place a huge burden on the taxpayers to fund these critical missions. As of today, there are no other drone companies that can match the performance of the DJI drones for the price.

I think we have to question companies that lobby in favor of bills like this one, especially when they have received millions of dollars in US government contracts and are clearly aligned with national security narratives that have not been proven true on any level. These companies most definitely have an incentive to limit DJI drones in the public sector.

In conclusion, I would ask that the committee NOT vote to approve HB 41, which would make the already hard job that law enforcement has even harder and more unsafe for our officers. Thank you for your consideration.

David Todd, Police Officer
Arlington Police Department
Arlington, TX

I've seen technology used in the police profession, but nothing equates to the impact that our UAS program has had. We use these aircraft day in and day out to preserve human life and to enhance officer safety. The equipment we use may be from a foreign country, but the technology, research and development are obvious. These pieces of equipment function safely and do their jobs to the highest standard. Removing the ability to use these aircraft would not only cause a massive budgetary concern, but it would take away our ability to keep our citizens and officers safe by putting these aircraft in harm's way first.

Carl Sedita, Sgt
Houston Police Department
Houston, TX

This bill will negatively effect all UAS and related equipment including the American UAS manufactures. Most American UAS Manufacture still acquire accessory components outside of the USA. China is the number one producer of Lithium Ion batteries, which is an essential UAS related equipment. In December of 2024, NDAA added a requirement that chinese manufactured UAS go through a risk assessment from a national security agency within one year.

Clinton Fox, Engineer
Self
Eastland, TX

This is a bill targeting hardware that to replace could cost the state 100s or millions to catch back up. Currently there are no US made UAS that can compete with a DJI aircraft. For security purposes you could mandate an agency to use a soc2 type 2 software to operate. This is similarly handled on your iPhone this would be a Chinese produced product with an American software operating it.

Chris Rider, Sgt
Irving Police Department
Aubrey, TX

I urge the Texas Legislature to carefully consider the potential consequences of passing House Bill 41. This bill would have significant negative impacts on the public safety agencies across the state, as it would restrict their ability to utilize essential equipment currently in use. Many public safety departments in Texas rely on foreign-made drones to effectively perform their duties and ensure the safety of citizens. The alternatives offered by U.S.-based manufacturers are, unfortunately, often inferior in performance and capability when compared to the foreign models available on the open market.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the argument put forth by certain U.S. companies claiming that foreign drone manufacturers are engaging in data theft is unsubstantiated and lacks credible evidence. There is no data supporting the assertion that foreign-made drones are compromising the privacy or security of our state.

Additionally, the financial burden imposed by this bill would be substantial. Should this bill pass, public safety departments would face an estimated cost exceeding \$3 million to transition to U.S.-made drone platforms, which would set back our efforts to maintain high-quality safety standards and technological capabilities.

Rather than imposing unnecessary restrictions, we should allow the free market to foster competition and innovation among drone manufacturers, both domestic and international. This approach would benefit the public safety sector, ensuring that they have access to the most effective, efficient tools available to protect our communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge Texas lawmakers to reconsider the passage of House Bill 41 and prioritize the safety and well-being of the citizens of Texas.

BRANDON KARR

Law Enforcement Drone Association

Pearland, TX

"Law Enforcement Drone Association (LEDA) Mission:

LEDA, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, develops best practices and training standards for law enforcement drone usage. It offers training for established UAS teams and agencies launching public safety UAS programs.

LEDA's Legislative Stance:

Data security is essential, but public safety agencies should choose the best equipment for their needs, regardless of origin. LEDA remains impartial and believes all drones, American or foreign, should meet the same standards. It opposes any legislation imposing outright bans.

Proposed Legislation:

Instead of bans based on country of origin, LEDA recommends using third-party software to air gap drone platforms from native software. Agencies should use applications meeting NIST 800-53 standards, with Soc 2 Type 2 or StateRamp certification preferred.

Data Security Safeguards for Chinese Drones:

Airplane Mode: Disables internet connection, preventing network requests and storing data locally on SD cards.

Third-Party Software: Agencies can bypass Chinese apps with certified alternatives.

Security Standards: DJI meets FIPS 140-2 standards and holds ISO27001 certification.

Why Bans Are Harmful:

Performance Issues:

Blue UAS are only about 60% as effective as foreign drones.

Common issues: poor camera quality, weak flight performance, complicated controllers, frequent connectivity issues, and GPS recalibration.

Manufacturing & Support:

Blue UAS production is limited to 10–20 airframes at a time.

Slow repair times severely impact smaller agencies.

Subscription models for repairs and replacements are costly and restrictive.

Cost Disparity:

Blue UAS are significantly more expensive—often at least 4x the cost of foreign drones.

Example: DJI Matrice 4T costs \$8,000; Skydio X10 costs \$20,000 plus subscriptions.

Foreign drones offer better performance for lower prices.

Douglas Parks, Assistant Chief

Roanoke Fire Dept

Roanoke, TX

The limits and unnecessary expenses this bill would put on municipalities and responders is unimaginable. Not to mention the fact that many of the preferred and more functional aircraft used right now by agencies would be void and agencies would have to replace their entire fleets. For probably 99% of the agencies that fly and the missions we fly anything we're going to see or what could be compromised can already be seen and has been seen by foreign satellites that have been orbiting the earth for years and will continue to orbit.

Christopher Brown, Sgt

Law Enforcement

Weatherford, TX

Drones are becoming increasingly used on a daily basis in law enforcement, Used to find missing or disabled individuals, reduce uses of force, protect officers from ambushes, disaster response, search and rescue, border security, and the list goes on and on. This ban would cripple 95% of the teams performing these daily tasks across Texas.

This bill isn't about Chinese made parts. It's about leveling a playing field in a tech world where the locals can't compete to provide a product that does what companies like DJI are providing. The local sub-par technology also comes at a cost of three times that of other companies; a cost smaller agencies can't budget for. To say this is about Chinese parts would require members of the legislation to give up their cell phones as parts contained within are made in China.

Despite it being in the bill, we all realize the legislation can't afford to fund grant money to replace serviceable equipment currently in the field for every agency in the State of Texas. With that, agencies like mine will likely lose their program all together not because of a security risk, but instead of greed. Greed from local companies who stand to gain billions by using government control on what agencies purchase. All in the name of security.

I ask the legislation to seriously look at the ramifications this bill will have and end it now. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kathy Turner

SELF

McGregor, TX

strongly support