

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

CS/CS/HB 221 — Recovery of Spaceflight Assets

by Judiciary Committee; Criminal Justice & Public Safety Subcommittee; and Rep. Sirois and others (CS/SB 936 by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Wright)

CS/HB 221 protects space vehicles, their parts, and other “spaceflight assets” that have fallen to earth. Under the bill, “spaceflight assets” include any item or part of an item that is used in spaceflight activities, including launch and reentry.

The bill provides that a spaceflight entity retains ownership over a spaceflight asset until the entity expressly abandons ownership of the asset.

The bill prohibits a person to use a spaceflight asset that he or she finds. Instead, the person must report the asset’s location to law enforcement, which must make a reasonable effort to identify and contact the asset’s owner.

If a law enforcement officer determines that exigent circumstances require that a spaceflight asset’s owner enter private property to recover the asset, the officer may authorize the entry. Exigent circumstances include, without limitation, a situation in which failure to enter the property would result in immediate danger to public safety or destruction of the asset.

The bill provides that a person who finds a spaceflight asset and knowingly uses it or refuses to surrender it commits a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for 1 year or less and a fine not exceeding \$1,000. Moreover, the person must pay restitution to the owner.

Finally, the bill expressly provides that it “does not limit liability protection for private property under state or federal law.”

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 115-1