

SESSION OF 2025

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 156

As Amended by House Committee on Judiciary

Brief*

SB 156, as amended, would create the crime of unlawful use of a laser pointer and would establish related penalties in the Kansas Criminal Code.

The crime would be defined as knowingly directing light from a laser pointer at:

- A law enforcement officer engaged in the performance of the officer's duties, which would be a class A person misdemeanor; or
- An aircraft in flight or the flight path of an aircraft, which would be a severity level 9 person felony.

The bill would exempt certain persons from the application of the crime:

- Any person who is authorized by an aircraft manufacturer or the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct research and development or flight test operations, while conducting such research or flight tests;
- Members or elements of the U.S. Department of Defense or U.S. Department of Homeland Security acting in an official capacity for the purpose of research, development, operations, testing, or training; or

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <https://klrd.gov/>

- An individual using a laser emergency signaling device to send an emergency distress signal.

“Laser pointer” would be defined by the bill as a device that emits light amplified by the stimulated emission of radiation that is visible to the human eye.

The bill would specify that anyone who commits the crime of unlawful use of a laser pointer may also be prosecuted for, convicted of, and punished for assault or battery.

The bill would be in effect upon publication in the *Kansas Register*.

Background

The bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Judiciary at the request of Senator Owens.

Senate Committee on Judiciary

In the Senate Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by a representative of the Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police, Kansas Peace Officers Association, and Kansas Sheriffs Association and representatives of the Kansas State Troopers Association (KSTA) and the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA). The proponents generally agreed that the bill would help to address the increasing use of laser pointers against aircraft during law enforcement events. The KPTA representative requested an amendment to apply the crime to operators of public transportation services and add a sentence enhancement for individuals assaulted in the performance of their employment.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by a representative of the Kansas Agricultural Aviation Association.

Written-only neutral testimony was provided by a representative of the State Board of Indigents' Defense Services (BIDS).

No other testimony was provided.

The Senate Committee recommended the bill be placed on the Consent Calendar.

House Committee on Judiciary

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by a representative of the KSTA and a representative of the Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police, Kansas Peace Officers Association, and Kansas Sheriffs Association. The proponents provided testimony that was substantially similar to testimony provided in the Senate Committee.

Written-only neutral testimony was provided by a representative of BIDS.

No other testimony was provided.

The House Committee amended the bill to change the effective date to upon publication in the *Kansas Register*.

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, as introduced, BIDS indicates that enactment of the bill would increase agency expenditures on legal counsel and support staff by unknown amounts, but estimates each new severity level 9 person felony case brought to the agency would result in State General Fund (SGF) expenditures of \$2,918 to \$4,375. BIDS also indicates that it may require 1.0 new FTE attorney position and additional support staff depending on the number of new cases brought to the agency.

The Sentencing Commission indicates that enactment of the bill has the potential to increase prison admissions and the number of prison beds needed. However, an exact estimate cannot be determined.

The Department of Corrections indicates enactment of the bill has the potential to increase agency operating expenditures depending on its effect on prison admissions and beds.

The Judicial Branch indicates enactment of the bill has the potential to increase the number of cases filed in district courts. This may increase agency operating expenditures due to the additional time spent by district court judicial and non-judicial personnel in processing, researching, and hearing cases. However, the Judicial Branch is unable to calculate an exact estimate of this effect. The bill has the potential to increase the collection of docket fees, fines, and supervision fees, which are deposited in the SGF; however, the amount of additional collections is unknown.

Any fiscal effect associated with enactment of the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2026 Governor's Budget Report*.

The League of Kansas Municipalities indicates enactment of the bill has the potential to increase city government expenditures on legal proceedings. The Kansas Association of Counties indicates enactment of the bill would have a negligible fiscal effect on counties.

Crimes; penalties; unlawful use of a laser pointer