



LOUISIANA SENATE

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UPDATE FROM SENATOR THOMPSON ON THE 2015 REGULAR SESSION

GAINS APPROVAL OF MEASURES THAT SUPPORT UNMANNED ARIAL SYSTEMS FOR AGRICULTURE AND FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

District 34 State Senator Francis Thompson (D-Delhi) and members of the Louisiana State Senate began the work of the 2015 Regular Session of the State Legislature on Monday, April 13, 2015. As the State Constitution dictates, the 2015 session is restricted to consideration of specific tax and spending issues with limited consideration of other 'general' matters. Prior to the beginning of the session, legislators pre-filed more than 1,047 bills, 271 in the Senate and 776 in the House. Two of those sponsored by Sen. Thompson have already started moving through the process as they gain the approval of legislators.

Senate Bill 183 by Sen. Thompson authorizes the Commissioner of Agriculture to adopt rules for the regulation of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) systems used in the course of commercial agricultural operations within the bounds of federal regulations. It also establishes licensure and registration requirements for UAV systems used in the course of commercial agricultural operations.

“Last session, we created the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Study Group to study this issue and provide recommendations,” said Sen. Thompson. “This piece of legislation is made possible by working with the study group, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the LSU AgCenter. I believe that it will bring Louisiana to the forefront of agriculture technology so that we will be prepared when the Federal Aviation Administration authorizes the usage of UAV systems.”



Senator Thompson and Randy Price of the LSU AgCenter demonstrate an unmanned aerial vehicle outside of a Senate committee.

Senate Bill 183 was approved by the full Senate last week and now awaits House committee action.

Another important measure by Sen. Thompson, who chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee, allows schools to work directly with farmers to buy more local food and serve it to Louisiana students. That measure, SB 184, increases what is known as the 'small purchase threshold.' Increasing the threshold to the



Senator Thompson meets with Katie Mularz (Right) with the Louisiana Farm to School Alliance and Marianne Cufone (left) with the Recirculating Farms Coalition outside after the passage of Senate Bill 184.

federal level simplifies the procedures currently in place for the purchasing of food by Louisiana's schools. By allowing schools the freedom to purchase up to the federal threshold, schools may get quotes exclusively from local producers instead of issuing Request for Proposals.

“This important piece of legislation is vital to our students and to our agricultural economy,” said Sen. Thompson. “It is well known that children who eat well, perform better in school. Using locally produced foods will ensure that students are eating foods that are healthier and tastier. In addition, this measure will provide a new market for local farmers, many of whom are struggling in these hard financial times.”

Senate Bill 184 was approved by the Senate Committee on Education last week and now goes the full Senate for its approval.

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