Bill would keep drones out of emergency zones

A bill by state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, to protect forests, property and the lives of citizens, firefighters and emergency personnel from drone interference, this week passed out of the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection.

“To think that someone would interfere with firefighting or emergency response situations to get a sneak peek or to post a drone video on YouTube is an outrage that is deserving of punishment and condemnation,” Gaines said in a statement. “I look forward to Senate Bill 807’s continued support as it makes its way through the Assembly.”

The bill would grant civil immunity to any emergency responder who damages an unmanned aircraft in the course of firefighting, air ambulance, or search-and-rescue operations. The bill stems from reports of private, unauthorized drones causing mission-critical aircraft to be grounded during firefighting and medical response operations, putting pilots, firefighters, civilians and property at unnecessary risk.