

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

May 15, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

Using aircraft for hunting-related purposes violates fair chase principles and traditions that Montana hunters value and honor. The increased use of aircraft to access remote areas and spot wildlife for hunting has become a more pressing issue in our state.

I thank the sponsor for bringing House Bill 202, a well-intended piece of legislation, and for her commitment to addressing this issue.

I signed a similar bill, Senate Bill 106, on May 8, 2025. Senate Bill 106 addresses the use of manned and unmanned aircraft for hunting but contained additional important prohibitions. If enacted, House Bill 202 would void these important additional prohibitions in Senate Bill 106.

First, House Bill 202 would void the prohibitions in Senate Bill 106 against landing aircraft on state and federal land in violation of applicable travel plans and against hunter interference by aircraft, including drones.

Second, House Bill 202 does not include Senate Bill 106's provision that requires written landowner permission to land aircraft for hunting purposes on private property. While these actions violate the law, Senate Bill 106 makes it possible for violators to lose hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges for these offenses. Losing hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges is often a more effective punishment than financial penalties. As such, Senate Bill 106 not only protects our tradition of fair chase, but also includes private property protections. House Bill 202 would void these provisions.

While there are many similarities between the two bills, Senate Bill 106 largely achieves the goals of House Bill 202. Both bills change the current standard in § 87-6-208, MCA for use of an aircraft for locating game animals for hunting and/or communicating those locations to others from “during” or “within” the “same calendar day” to “within 24 hours.” Senate Bill 106 would make that change permanent, while House Bill 202 would sunset the change after two years.

In this instance, the Legislature has presented me with two thoughtful bills that address an important issue. Enacting House Bill 202 after enacting Senate Bill 106, however, would remove important protections for private property and prohibitions on landing aircraft on public land. Therefore, Senate Bill 106 should remain as Montana’s standard for ensuring fair chase hunting practices.

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 202: “AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO THE USE OF AIRCRAFT FOR HUNTING; INCLUDING GAME BIRDS IN THE PROTECTED SPECIES; EXTENDING THE WAITING PERIOD AFTER USE OF AN AIRCRAFT; BANNING THE POSSESSION OF UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES WHILE HUNTING; INCREASING FINES AND PENALTIES; AMENDING SECTION 87-6-208, MCA; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A TERMINATION DATE.”

Sincerely,


Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State