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## Transportation Committee

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### HB 2836

**Brief Description:** Establishing an unpiloted aircraft system state coordinator.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lovick, Boehnke, Valdez, Gregerson, Ortiz-Self, Riccelli, Shewmake, Kloba, Mead, Doglio, Entenman, Tarleton, Hudgins, Ryu, Pettigrew, Thai, Morgan, Santos, Lekanoff, Slatter, Orwall, Davis, Sells, Goodman, Appleton, J. Johnson and Chopp.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Unpiloted Aircraft System State Coordinator in the Aviation Division of the Washington State Department of Transportation.

**Hearing Date:** 2/10/20

**Staff:** Christine Thomas (786-7142).

#### Background:

Unmanned aircraft systems (drones) are aircraft without a human pilot on board. The flight is controlled either autonomously by computers, or under remote control by a pilot. Washington has no laws that specifically regulate drones.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has broad authority to regulate the use of airspace. In 2016 the FAA finalized the first rules governing the operation and certification of small civil unmanned aircraft under 55 pounds.

To fly drones for work or business, owners must learn the Small Unpiloted Aircraft System (UAS) Rules; become an FAA-certified drone pilot; and register their drone with the FAA.

Government agencies can operate drones under two options: (a) fly under the Small UAS Rules that allow operation of drones under 55 pounds at or below 400 feet above ground level for visual line-of-sight operations only; or (b) fly under federal requirements for public aircraft to

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operate with a Certificate of Waiver or Authorization to be able to self-certify drones and operators for flights performing governmental functions.

In 2018 the FAA updated the rules for drones flown for recreational purposes, which are exempt from federal regulation if they meet certain criteria and are registered with the FAA.

Educators who fly drones for instructional purposes can operate drones under two options: (a) fly under the Small UAS Rules; or (b) fly as a recreational flier.

**Summary of Bill:**

An "unpiloted aircraft system" (UAS) is defined in statute and must meet the same criteria and standards for an "unmanned aircraft system" established by the FAA. The UAS State Coordinator is established in the Aviation Division of the Washington State Department of Transportation. The Director of the Aviation Division or the Director's designee is appointed as the UAS State Coordinator. The coordinator's duties include: (a) assisting with UAS training, certification, and continuing education for state agencies; (b) coordinating with local governments on state and federal UAS policies and laws; (c) acting as a state-level coordinator in times of emergency; (d) coordinating with the FAA and state agencies on UAS safety and accident trends; and (e) other duties as they relate to UAS in Washington.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.