

Tribune & Georgian
OPINION

January 28, 2016

Dear Editor,

If you believe that it's reasonable to scuttle citizen rights in order to promote business profits, and that people exist to serve the needs of business, rather than the reverse, you won't find fault with HB 734, the Georgia Space Flight Act, introduced by our representative Jason Spencer. But if you're a stickler for preserving all 10 amendments in our Bill of Rights, you will.

You might also be disturbed by a Bill whose last line states that "All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed," to cover oversights made in our state legislators' haste to deliver for their pet corporations.

Provisions in the bill strip citizens, who would be adversely affected by noise nuisance from operation of the proposed spaceport, of their constitutional right to redress of grievances, by denying them legal recourse for noise nuisance.

The Bill would require third parties (innocent bystanders) adversely affected by spaceport activities to find remedy under the three-tiered indemnification plan contained in the federal 2015 Space Act, signed into law by President Barak Obama on November 25th, 2015. That Act extends the largess of the indemnification provided for commercial space companies until 2025, in order to nurture the fledgling commercial space industry.

Under this plan, tier 1 requires the space company to buy insurance, or establish evidence of an ability to pay, up to \$500 million maximum probable loss (MPL) per launch that the FAA has calculated for that launch.

Tier 2 indemnifies the launch company for an additional 2.2 Billion (more or less--it's upped yearly for inflation) compliments of us, the U.S. taxpayers. That's right, we pay for the damages they cause us in tier 2.

In case this upper level of damages is breached, additional damages revert back to the launch company.

The Federal 2015 Space Act, however, didn't require space companies to submit to any new meaningful regulations to protect our taxpayer interests.

Locally, Representative Spencer, County Administrator Howard, County Commissioner Clark and other proponents are asking us to hold two opposing views about the commercial space companies being courted, and approve actions based on that incompatibility:

On one hand, they present these companies as fledgling, inherently dangerous businesses that seek taxpayer indemnification for possible, even catastrophic, "mishaps."

On the other, they present them as confident, mature representatives of a sound business model we should entrust with our treasure, our most revered lands, our homes, and our lives.

Our justifiable outrage at assaults on our rights, and our sincere bewilderment at the reasoning of those promoting the spaceport proposal, are met with condescension and obfuscation. These aren't substitutes for life-lessons we all learned on the playground. Therefore, I'll add a couple more acronyms to the spaceport alphabet soup from that formative time in our collective pasts: PCS (plain common sense,) ARFP (accepted rules of fair play,) and HDP (the Humpty-Dumpty principal: don't put in jeopardy fragile things you can't repair.)

PCS and ARFP should be invoked to protect us from running foul of the HDP before it's too late.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Eichhorn

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