

Buckle Your Seat Belts:***Federal Government Launches Pilot Program Designed to Accelerate Integration of Commercial Drones into the National Airspace***

On October 25, 2017, President Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum directing the Secretary of Transportation to establish an Unmanned Aircraft Systems (“UAS”) Integration Pilot Program, with the intention of accelerating the integration of safe, commercial drone activity into the national airspace.

The FAA is preparing to launch a pilot program that will allow State, local, and tribal governments to submit proposals for UAS innovation zones in their jurisdictions. Interested governments will need to propose well-defined frameworks for Federal and non-Federal roles in the management of UAS flights in their jurisdiction, and should describe innovative UAS flights to be safely conducted by either industry or the local government. These governments will be encouraged to partner with industry innovators on pilot projects that can fly drones in ways that current FAA regulations restrict – such as flights beyond visual line of sight, flights at night, and flights over people.

The program will help the USDOT and FAA develop a regulatory framework, permitting more complex low-altitude operations; identifying various ways to balance local and national interests; improving communications with local, state and tribal jurisdictions; addressing security and privacy risks; and accelerating the approval of operations that currently require special authorizations.

“Stakeholders will have the opportunity through this program to demonstrate how their innovative technological and operational solutions can address complex unmanned aircraft integration challenges,” said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. “At the same time, the program recognizes the importance of community participation in meaningful discussions about balancing local and national interests related to integrating unmanned aircraft.”

The FAA will begin accepting proposals between now and **January 23, 2018**.

As Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao said recently:

“The integration of drones into our national airspace will be the biggest technological challenge to aviation since the beginning of the Jet Age. Our job is to prepare the way for this new technology...so it can be deployed safely and usher in a new era of aviation service, accessibility and ingenuity.”

For additional information, please contact:

Chris Cotter

330.849.6756 | ccotter@ralaw.com

Patrick Hanley

330.762.7976 | phanley@ralaw.com

Jessica Lopez

330.849.6778 | jlopez@ralaw.com