



February 12, 2019

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Chairman Larsen:

As organizations representing the commercial drone and related aviation and vertical industries, we express our support for H.R. 1108, the Aviation Funding Stability Act of 2019, a bill designed to protect the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) from the effects of future federal government shutdowns. We support this effort to alleviate the negative impact of shutdowns on the commercial drone industry and the wide range of vertical market sectors it supports in the United States, and appreciate your leadership on this important issue.

We are at a critical and exciting time for the commercial drone industry. Once properly enabled, the safe integration of drones into our National Airspace System (NAS) will save countless lives and have a significant economic impact in the United States. While great strides have been made in recent years to support growth in the commercial drone industry, it is an industry that relies heavily upon its partnership and collaboration with the FAA to function properly.

Specifically, the recent closure of many FAA and Department of Transportation offices that work closely with the commercial drone industry during the December 22, 2018 – January 25, 2019 partial government shutdown caused significant industry disruptions. Moreover, the shutdown delayed policymaking that is essential to the continued economic growth in the United States.

Below are some specific examples of how the recent shutdown adversely impacted the commercial drone industry:

FAA Waivers and Other Approvals Delayed: The FAA's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Office is responsible for processing thousands of waivers and other applications that are necessary to conduct expanded drone operations beyond the basic operations allowed under the current regulatory framework (14 C.F.R. Part 107), such as flights at night, over people or beyond visual line of sight of the pilot. Thousands of companies (as well as public sector stakeholders) rely on these types of FAA waivers to conduct advanced drone operations that are

essential to their workers' safety and business operations, as well as for emergency response activities. The FAA already has a massive backlog of waiver applications and the processing of almost all existing and new applications was suspended during the shutdown. The processing of petitions for exemption from various Federal Aviation Regulations was also suspended.

Policy and Rulemakings Delayed: All aviation rulemaking, including several critical drone-related regulatory actions, was suspended as a result of the shutdown. In August 2016, Part 107 of the Federal Aviation Regulations went into effect, which for the first time broadly authorized commercial drone use in the United States. However, the current rules still contain overly burdensome regulatory hurdles that make it impossible for companies in the United States to realize the full potential of drone technology and the resulting public benefits. Over the last several years, industry and the FAA have worked diligently to craft new rules that will allow for further integration of drones into the NAS and unlock the full potential of commercial drone technology. As a result of the recent shutdown, key rulemaking efforts necessary to enable expanded drone operations ground to a standstill.

Issuance of Airman Certificates Suspended: As a result of the recent shutdown, the FAA suspended issuing airmen certifications. Thousands of would-be UAS pilots were unable to obtain the Remote Pilot Certificate that is necessary to conduct commercial drone operations.

Industry Partnerships Suspended: While the public benefits of commercial UAS are substantial, policymaking has lagged behind the technology in the United States. Recognizing this, and in an effort to help move policy forward, the Trump Administration launched an innovative UAS Integration Pilot Program (IPP) to accelerate the safe integration of drones into the NAS and to foster the development of new drone technologies for use in a wide range of commercial industries. The IPP generated a lot of industry excitement, but while significant progress has been made under the IPP, all work under the program was suspended during the shutdown. Innovative work that was being conducted through other FAA-drone industry collaborative efforts, such as Partnership for Safety Programs (PSPs), was also suspended.

Key Industry Events Postponed: The FAA's annual UAS Symposium, which serves as a focal point for FAA officials, government agencies, and industry stakeholders to collaborate on key issues for the commercial drone industry, was postponed as a result of the shutdown. Other industry events that are critical to fostering government-industry working relationships, including the Unmanned Aircraft Safety Team (UAST) meeting and the Commercial Drone Alliance Domestic Drone Safety and Security Series event, were also postponed as a result of the shutdown.

The recent government shutdown caused significant harm to America's commercial drone industry. We appreciate your efforts to protect the FAA from the effects of future shutdowns in order to enable the commercial drone industry to thrive.

Sincerely,



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