



November 19, 2015 Hearing: “The Disrupter Series: The Fast-Evolving Uses and Economic Impacts of Drones”

Committee on Energy and Commerce’s Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Questions for the record, Brian Wynne, President and CEO, Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI)

Question submitted by The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.

1. Mr. Wynne, the Department of Transportation has set June 2016 as its goal for a final rule on commercial drones. Do you think this timeframe is realistic? How is the delay impacting your business?

The FAA’s small UAS rulemaking has been beset by several delays. Considering that safety is at stake, we cannot afford to continue waiting. The FAA needs to make UAS integration a top priority.

With that said, in May 2014, the agency announced it would consider granting exemptions for certain low-risk commercial UAS applications under Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012. Since then, the FAA has granted more than 2,600 exemptions to businesses looking to use UAS for precision agriculture; inspecting infrastructure; mapping and surveying; film, photo and video production; public safety or emergency response; and environmental inspection and regulation.

The FAA continues to approve about 50 new commercial operations a week, a process that has been recently streamlined and expedited. However, this current system of case-by-case approvals – whether streamlined or not – isn’t a long-term solution for the many small businesses wanting to fly. In addition, the requirements for UAS operators are generally more onerous under the section 333 exemption process than the operator requirements contemplated in the draft UAS rule. It’s our view that a Realtor or a wedding photographer who wants to fly a lightweight platform for aerial photography shouldn’t have to master stalls in a manned aircraft or learn how to land a 2,000 pound Cessna.

As an industry, we want to see the integration of UAS proceed and without any further delays. Once this happens, we will have an established framework for UAS operations that will allow anyone who follows the rule to fly. It will do away with the case-by-case system of approvals that currently exists, reducing the barriers to UAS operations. And importantly, the integration will establish a rule for the commercial use of UAS so that small businesses from every industry sector can take advantage of this innovative technology.

Given the technology's potential, it is important that the FAA finalize the small UAS rule as quickly as possible.