

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
“The Disrupter Series: The Fast-Evolving Uses and
Economic Impacts of Drones”
November 19, 2015**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good morning and welcome to our hearing examining unmanned aerial systems—or drones—which are poised to upend the status quo in sectors across our economy.

This is the latest installment of our Disrupter Series covering a variety of disruptive technologies that are redefining our lives and improving our economic condition.

This hearing is timely. Tomorrow, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration will hold an important gathering in its series of multistakeholder meetings to develop privacy best practices for drones.

And the FAA has also set tomorrow as the deadline for recommendations from the Drone Registry Task Force.

Drones promise to make life easier, safer, and less costly for workers in a wide array of industries.

The American Farm Bureau has forecast that farmers using drone services to monitor their crops could see a return on investment of \$12 per acre for corn, \$2.60 for an acre of soybeans, and \$2.30 per acre of wheat.

The technology now exists for telecommunications and utility employees to send drones up to inspect telephone poles, monitoring their findings from the truck.

Insurance adjusters sent out to inspect a claimant’s home for hail damage could use drones to conduct the examination without needing to climb a ladder and walk around a slippery roof.

And everyone from movie studios to broadcasters have interests too. And with nearly a million units expected to be sold, consumer drones are predicted to be the next wave in holiday purchases this year. I’m sure many of us here today have noticed that trend as we start gift shopping.

Check your gutters or a leak on your roof without leaving the ground, no problem.

The sector-specific benefits of drones add up to a massive economic impact.

According to one study by the Association for Unmanned Vehicles Systems International (AUVSI) —one of our witnesses today—drones will produce about \$82 billion in growth in the first ten years after they are integrated into our National Airspace System.

The study also predicts the addition of 100,000 jobs over those ten years, which encompasses drone makers, software engineers, suppliers, researchers, and other workers that would support expanded drone production and use.

To realize these benefits, the Federal Aviation Administration is working with stakeholders to safely integrate drones into American airspace.

Simultaneously, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration is holding multistakeholder meetings with the goal of producing industry best practices around privacy.

There are important questions around privacy laws and safety. U.S. companies like Intel are working hard to develop solutions that would enhance safety automatically, which no regulator could produce.

In fact, I would be more worried that overregulation on safety could prevent the investment, testing, and research needed to develop these market-driven solutions.

With the advent of drones, many have expressed concerns that they present novel privacy issues.

Certainly drones go where people can't. A neighbor can fly a drone over your fence to pester you and invade your privacy—and there have been disputes ending in drones being shot out of the air by annoyed citizens.

There are interesting questions around whether, how, and under what circumstances a drone owner can be identified and held to account for his or her behavior. Those questions are now being addressed at the FAA as part of the development of its registry. I should note that I share the concerns of many with requiring small recreational drones to be registered with the federal government. Such an approach would involve casual users in a major government bureaucracy with seemingly little benefit.

As regulators prepare to integrate drones into the airspace, it is clear that safety is the number one priority. But cutting-edge drone testing and evaluation is occurring overseas because the current process to approve commercial drone use is both restrictive and cumbersome in the U.S.

I join many in the drone development space in calling for quick but flexible regulatory solutions that allow for future innovation. The speed of innovation can't remain at the speed of regulation for long.

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