



Drones in Louisiana

HELPING THE PELICAN
STATE TAKE FLIGHT

The Louisiana economy is struggling, with 155,000 missing jobs in the state since the start of 2020 alone.

As the drone industry continues to rapidly grow, Louisiana has a unique opportunity to be a leader in bringing this unique innovation, and jobs that come with it, to the state.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE DRONE INDUSTRY?

Drones are among the most promising technologies for innovation across Louisiana and the United States. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, there are over **380,000 commercial drones registered in the United States** and tens of thousands more abroad. **Private companies are investing extensively in drone technology.**

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE USES OF DRONES?

Drones are most commonly associated with the **delivery industry** which is a rapidly expanding use. Rouses is just one example of a Louisiana company that is testing out drone delivery in our neighboring state of Alabama. But, drones can deliver far more than groceries.



The company Zipline, which delivers **critical medical supplies**, has completed more than 100,000 deliveries across Africa and has now expanded its presence into the US. Just this year, drones have been used to deliver **medical supplies to seniors in Florida, COVID-19 testing kits in Texas, and an organ in Nevada.**



Other uses include **land surveying, agricultural use, and inspection of offshore oil rigs.**



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WHO REGULATES DRONES

Drone operations are regulated both at the federal and state levels. At the federal level, drone equipment and pilots are certified by the Federal Aviation Administration, which regulates “navigable airspace” (though where navigable airspace begins is disputed).



Drones flying at low altitudes, below 200 feet or so, can implicate property rights, as well as privacy and nuisance laws, which are determined by states. Today, the federal and state governments are negotiating the best way to share authority over drone operations.

WHICH STATES REGULATE DRONES WELL?

According to a recent report from the Mercatus Center on Drone Readiness, North Dakota, Arkansas, and Oklahoma rank in the top three.

North Dakota ranks the highest, as it provides property rights to landowners for their airspace while balancing that with easement laws. This means operators are protected from nuisance and trespass laws as long as they don't disturb people on the ground.

Arkansas, meanwhile, ranks highly as it allows state and local authorities to lease low-altitude airspace above roads to create “drone highways,” allowing for delivery and other uses.

Louisiana ranks a meager 34th. While localities can lease airspace above roads, it's not clear the state can do the same. And although Louisiana provides for property rights, it fails to have easements for drones which increases the risk of litigation.

LOUISIANA CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DRONES BY:



Creating a drone easement law so drones can fly without legal risk as long as they don't bother property owners.



Expanding the ability for government to lease out space above state and local roads to allow for the creation of “drone highways.”



Creating a drone commission to examine how private industry can better work with government to expand the drone industry.



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