



**National Conference of State Legislatures
Office of State-Federal Relations**

President Issues Memo Establishing Federal Drone Pilot Program

Oct. 26, 2017

On Oct. 25, President Donald Trump issued a [presidential memorandum](#) directing the U.S. Department of Transportation to establish a pilot program to help spur further innovation of unmanned aerial systems (drones). Specifically, the pilot program would allow states and local governments to propose new models for regulating drones and apply for waivers from Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations that currently prohibit certain types of drone operations, including beyond-visual-line-of-sight, nighttime operations and flights over people. The memo is silent on the major question facing this technology: The appropriate regulatory role for states and their authority to issue reasonable time, place and manner restrictions on drone operations. However, a [question and answer document](#) accompanying the announcement noted that, “The Presidential Memorandum envisions that partnerships could give local officials an opportunity to help manage local operations subject to FAA safety oversight. The department will announce additional details in the coming days.”

NCSL has been very active in the current debate in Congress, issuing letters in support of both the [Drone Innovation Act](#) in the House and the [Drone Federalism Act](#) in the Senate. Both bills aim to establish a framework that would provide authority for states to issue reasonable time, place and manner restrictions. Additionally, NCSL is a member of the FAA’s Drone Advisory Subcommittee that is exploring the proper role for states when it comes to drones.

We will continue to follow any new developments, but please feel free to reach out to NCSL staff [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779) and [Kristen Hildreth](#) (202-624-3597) if you have any questions or concerns.

Key Documents

[Presidential Memorandum on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Pilot Program](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)