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LOCAL CONTROL VITAL FOR UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

As drones are increasingly utilized in our everyday life and new, beneficial applications are developed—from firefighting and search and rescue to infrastructure inspection—an integrated regulatory framework for drones, or unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), is needed. This framework should be comprised of a seamless web of federal, state and local regulations that will work in harmony, complementing one another, to ensure an effective regulatory approach that reduces risk and increases the positive uses of drones.

Some members of the UAS industry are engaged in a nationwide push, seeking to preempt cities in every state. They are also continuing to advocate for policies on Capitol Hill to eliminate local governments' ability to enact reasonable and common sense restrictions on behalf of their communities.

As policies related to drones advance, the League urges Congress and the Administration to:

Oppose Pre-Emption: As Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization moves forward, the League strongly opposes efforts to federally pre-empt local regulations concerning drone operations. Drones operate in places where cities and local authorities have traditionally exercised control and where local authorities have the greatest awareness of particular conditions. Local authorities know where it is safe for drones to take off and land and when there might be large gatherings (e.g. parades, farmers markets) that could impact drone operations. In addition, in the event of drone incidents, it is local agency first responders (primarily police and fire) who will get the call. As drone operations increase dramatically, the authority of cities to address uniquely local concerns must be preserved.

Support an Integrated Regulatory Framework That Preserves Local Control: Ensuring that drones operate safely and efficiently will require an integrated regulatory framework that includes federal, state, and local government working together. It is critical to preserve existing local authority to adopt narrowly-tailored, reasonable rules relating to drone operations consistent with their local police power and FAA guidance. As cities have the power to make reasonable time, place and manner restrictions around 1st Amendment and 2nd Amendment rights, drone operators should also be expected to similarly abide by time, place and manner restrictions. As cities can determine where cars can drive and bikers and skateboarders can ride, they should also be able to decide when and where it is appropriate to operate a drone that has the capability to fly in crowds, on streets, at eye-level, or even inches above the ground. The League encourages the Administration and Congress to adopt a regulatory framework that recognizes the critical role that local government must play in regulating drone operations in very low altitude airspace.