

**In Support of Legislation to Advance Federal Aviation Administration Drone Regulations**

1 Unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as “drones,” are aircraft operated with no human pilot aboard.  
2 Remotely-piloted drones can be used safely and show huge potential for use by electric utilities to survey  
3 electric power equipment, assess damage, and aid in construction and repair. However, the Federal  
4 Aviation Administration’s (FAA) aviation rules regulating drones have failed to keep pace with this new  
5 technology.

6  
7 On February 14, 2012, President Obama signed the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012  
8 requiring the FAA to develop a plan to integrate civil drones into the national airspace system. After  
9 several years of rulemaking proceedings, the FAA released final rules for commercial operation of drones  
10 on June 21, 2016, referred to collectively as “Part 107.” Shortly thereafter, the President signed the FAA  
11 Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016 on July 15, 2016, to extend the FAA authorization until  
12 September 30, 2017. Among other things, this reauthorization allowed the FAA to streamline the  
13 regulatory processes for using drones during emergencies and disaster response efforts, and to design  
14 rules for operating drones beyond the visual line of sight and at night if responding to covered incidents or  
15 activities. The 2016 reauthorization also allowed the FAA to designate areas where drones may not fly,  
16 including above critical infrastructure owned by electric utilities.

17  
18 Since passage of the 2016 reauthorization, the FAA has not developed a clear process for using drones  
19 during emergencies or for utilities to operate drones for infrastructure inspection and repair beyond the  
20 visual line of sight and at night. Further, the current rules still do not clearly set forth an application  
21 process for owners of critical infrastructure to prohibit drone operation in airspace above that  
22 infrastructure. Thus, while the reauthorization included several provisions intended to encourage drone  
23 usage for important emergency recovery efforts, including by utilities, the FAA has not kept up with the  
24 congressional requirements. Going forward, it is important that the relevant committees continue to  
25 exercise oversight of the FAA to ensure that rules are developed that facilitate integration of drones into  
26 the airspace for utility infrastructure inspection and recovery efforts.

27  
28 **NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED:** That the American Public Power Association  
29 (APPA) believes unmanned aerial aircraft (drones) can be beneficial to the operation of public power  
30 utilities, including for surveying electric power equipment, assessing damage, and aiding in construction  
31 and repair; and

32 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That APPA supports continued congressional oversight of the FAA to  
33 ensure that the agency keeps pace with drone technology and direction by Congress in previous  
34 legislation; and

35

36 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That APPA supports efforts in Congress to improve FAA drone  
37 regulations and federal aviation laws that facilitate, and not impede, the responsible use of drones by  
38 public power utilities.