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RESEARCH SUMMARY

Is Your State Ready for Drone Commerce? The 2022 State-by-State Scorecard

Commercial drone companies are testing and creating agriculture, medical, and home delivery services in countries around the world. Yet progress in the United States has been slow, in part because of a lack of clarity about federal and state roles in drone and airspace management. To jump-start the drone industry, states can create drone highways—aerial corridors above public roads. In "Is Your State Ready for Drone Commerce?" Brent Skorup presents a state-by-state scorecard (see table 1 on the next page).

Creating a System of Drone Highways

Many states have laws that allow cities to lease the air rights above public roads, vest property owners with air rights, and establish avigation easements. With these laws, states can facilitate future commercial drone operations in low-altitude airspace while Congress and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) develop national drone policies. Creating a clear and coherent framework at the state and local level, such as a system of drone highways, will make parcel delivery faster, improve distribution of medical supplies, and create jobs in the technology and logistics sectors.

Factors for Ranking States' "Drone Readiness"

Skorup uses six factors to score and rank the 50 states' preparedness for commercial drone services:

1. *Airspace lease law* (30 points): More than one-third of states currently allow state or local authorities to lease airspace above public roads and private property.
2. *Avigation easement law* (25 points): These laws allow drone flights as long as they are high enough to avoid being a noise nuisance to landowners and passersby.
3. *Task force or program office* (20 points): States that have a drone program office within their department of transportation or a statewide task force will be ahead of the curve and can anticipate future issues before they become problems for operators and residents.
4. *Law vesting landowners with air rights* (10 points): These laws clarify property rights, thereby reducing litigation risk for drone operators and homeowners alike.
5. *Sandbox* (10 points): The term *sandbox* refers to a designated place to test new technologies under liberal rules for a predetermined duration. A drone sandbox allows early stage companies to show proof of concept to investors and regulators.
6. *Jobs estimate* (5 points): The number of drone jobs in a state signals future growth in drone commerce.

TABLE 1. STATE RANKINGS

Overall Rank		Overall Score
1	Oklahoma	74
2	North Dakota	70
2	Arkansas	70
4	Arizona	68
5	Minnesota	66
6	North Carolina	58
6	Georgia	58
6	New Jersey	58
9	Nevada	57
9	Montana	57
11	Virginia	55
12	Texas	54
12	Washington	54
14	California	50
15	Maryland	49
16	Delaware	47
17	Wisconsin	46
18	Louisiana	44
19	Michigan	41
19	Ohio	41
21	Vermont	40
22	Massachusetts	39
22	Missouri	39
24	Wyoming	38
24	Colorado	38

Overall Rank		Overall Score
26	Idaho	37
26	Hawaii	37
26	Indiana	37
29	Tennessee	36
30	Oregon	35
30	West Virginia	35
32	Kansas	34
33	New Hampshire	33
34	Utah	32
34	Pennsylvania	32
36	New York	25
37	Connecticut	24
38	Illinois	23
38	Alaska	23
40	Alabama	15
41	Maine	12
41	Florida	12
43	Kentucky	11
43	South Carolina	11
45	Iowa	5
46	South Dakota	4
47	New Mexico	3
48	Nebraska	1
48	Rhode Island	1
48	Mississippi	1

Note: Puerto Rico has a profile at the end of the report; however, because our data source does not provide drone jobs numbers for US territories, we have omitted Puerto Rico from the rankings.