

Udall's Measure to Strengthen UAS Testing Hub at NMSU Is Signed into Law

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 29 July 2016 04:35



WASHINGTON —U.S. Senator Tom Udall's measure to solidify Southern New Mexico's position as a leading testing center for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS, commonly referred to as "drones") was signed into law July 15 as part of the bill reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration.

New Mexico State University's UAS Flight Test Center was the FAA's original UAS test center; it served as a model for six sites across the country that were authorized by Congress in 2012. Udall's language adds NMSU, creating a group of test ranges that can equally compete for federal projects — a move that will give NMSU parity with the sites authorized in 2012 and help attract business to the region.

"Putting New Mexico State University's UAS Flight Test Center on equal footing with the six test sites across the country will help Southern New Mexico retain its role as a leader in UAS technology innovation," said Udall, a member of the Senate Commerce Committee. "This amendment will create jobs in New Mexico by attracting business from innovators and the federal government alike. The FAA chose New Mexico State University as the first testing center for this technology, and I look forward to Southern New Mexico continuing to lead the way on this critical 21st century technology."

"It is great news that the UAS flight test center provision is now law," NMSU Chancellor Garrey Carruthers said. "NMSU is one of the leading institutions in the United States for Unmanned Aerial Systems, and its projected economic impact for the state is in the tens of millions of dollars over the next few years. Putting NMSU's UAS flight test center back on a level playing field with the six congressionally-authorized flight test sites managed by the FAA will make NMSU more competitive and attractive to businesses and the federal government for research, development, testing, and evaluation."

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Udall's provision was originally included as an amendment to the FAA reauthorization bill when it was considered by the Senate Commerce Committee. The legislation was signed into law by President Obama.