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US Federal Updates

Upcoming Federal Leadership Changes

Summary of Facts

The 2024 election has ushered in significant changes in Washington, D.C., including shifts in federal leadership and the appointment of key cabinet positions. President-elect Donald Trump has nominated former Republican congressman Sean Duffy to serve as secretary of transportation. Duffy represented Wisconsin's 7th district from 2011 to 2019. Most recently, he served as cohost of *The Bottom Line*, a show on Fox Business, after joining Fox News as a contributor in 2020.

Additionally on Capitol Hill last week, Sen. John Thune (R-S.Dak.) was elected as Senate majority leader, while Rep. Mike Johnson (R-La.-04) made progress toward retaining his position as speaker of the House of Representatives. On the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.-06) is pursuing a waiver to keep his position as chair despite existing term limits. However, he faces challenges from Rep. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.-01), chair of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, and potentially Rep. David Rouzer (R-N.C.-07), chair of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment. Meanwhile, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), who currently serves as the ranking member, is expected to assume the role of chair of the Senate Commerce Committee.

VAI Position and Actions

VAI congratulates newly elected and appointed leaders and is dedicated to building strong relationships with federal and state officials. As leadership transitions continue, VAI will monitor developments to evaluate their impact on the vertical aviation industry.

State and Local Updates

VAI Member Rotor Technologies Adds Automated Aerial Application Capability to Unmanned Helicopter



Summary of Facts

Last week, Katia Veraza, VAI Manager of Government Affairs, attended the unveiling of Rotor Technologies' Sprayhawk, an unmanned helicopter designed to advance the future of flight via automated aerial application operations, in Fort Worth, Texas.

Rotor Technologies, builder of the world's largest crop-spraying drone, last week announced a strategic partnership with AG-NAV, a leader in precision navigation and flow control technology. The collaboration integrates AG-NAV's advanced Guida Platinum navigation system into Rotor's Sprayhawk unmanned helicopter, enhancing precision and efficiency in agricultural aerial applications.

The Sprayhawk, with its 110-gal. capacity based on the Robinson Helicopter platform, is equipped with an automated aerial application system. Starting with the 2025 model year, AG-NAV will exclusively supply agricultural navigation solutions for the Sprayhawk.

VAI Position and Actions

VAI proudly acknowledges members such as Rotor Technologies for their innovation and collaboration with fellow VAI member Robinson Helicopter Co. Our members consistently drive the growth and advancement of this industry, and we are thrilled to support and celebrate their achievements along the way. Congratulations to Rotor Technologies on a successful launch!

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"Word from the Street," by Chuck Street, VAI Western US Regional Representative

VAI Air Tour Safety Conference Follow-Up

Following the VAI Air Tour Safety Conference in September, Rainbow Helicopters hosted an open house Oct. 17 at Honolulu International Airport (PHNL). The event provided an opportunity to engage with elected officials and staff from Hawaii, including State Rep. Darius Kila (D-44) and staffers from the office of US Rep. Ed Case (D-Hawaii-01).

Riverside County Sheriff's Aviation Unit Holds Open House

On Oct. 23, I attended an open house put on by the Riverside County (California) Sheriff's Aviation Unit at Hemet-Ryan Airport (KHMT). The event showcased helicopters from more than 15 Southern California law enforcement agencies, along with a Cobra gunship and a Black Hawk helicopter from US Marine Corps crews. Riverside County Sheriff pilot Mike Calhoun moderated a panel discussion addressing challenges faced by law enforcement pilots and safety protocols. The professionalism displayed by these pilots was remarkable.

Developments at Torrance Airport

VAI is closely monitoring ongoing issues at Torrance Municipal Airport (KTOA), home to Robinson Helicopter Co.'s headquarters. Recent actions by the city council, including the implementation of landing fees and the removal of the airport fund, have raised concerns among operators and stakeholders. VAI remains actively engaged, maintaining communication with industry members to address these challenges.

American Heroes Air Show Canceled

It was disappointing to learn that the American Heroes Air Show in Los Angeles, a long-standing annual event at Hansen Dam Recreation Area, was canceled this year. The US Army Corps of Engineers unexpectedly required an environmental impact study just weeks before the event, which was to take place on Nov. 16. The cost and timeline of the study made it impossible to proceed. The show, which features law enforcement, firefighting, and military helicopters, draws thousands of attendees each year. VAI has been a proud sponsor of the event.

FAA Releases AC on Hawaii Helicopter Tour Operations

The FAA recently released a new advisory circular (AC) regarding Hawaii helicopter tour operations. VAI's Government Affairs team is actively working with Hawaii operators to review and address the circular's implications.

VAI remains dedicated to supporting our members and promoting safety across the vertical aviation industry.

Keep flying safely, and ***keep powering up!***