

DRONES, AIRSPACE, AND THE SHARING ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Commercial drone industry advocates have asserted for years that drone services will be limited in the US so long as private landowners are legally entitled to exclude drones from the low airspace above their land. Sadly, the industry's efforts to weaken airspace rights laws to make way for commercial drones have stalled the development of private airspace sharing systems—an alternative approach to drone routing that could finally unleash commercial drone services across the country. This Article describes how policies that embrace rather than ignore landowners' property interests in the low airspace above their land could accelerate the deployment of commercial drone technologies. By enacting new laws that affirm and more clearly define landowners' airspace rights, legislators could enable the emergence of blockchain-based private airspace sharing platforms capable of opening up commercial drone activity in much of the country's low airspace. Business models built upon such platforms and legal frameworks would also promote greater public acceptance of drone overflights and more efficient use of the nation's valuable airspace resources.