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We are a small company that is developing technology that is of high interest to DoD and civilian federal agencies, especially the intelligence/law enforcement community. For two years, we have attended the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International's annual trade show, and it has been a great opportunity to meet military and civilian government employees who had the opportunity to learn about our technology and assess how it could benefit their various roles. These meetings are leading toward an accelerated opportunity for the federal government to obtain a new technology that will save lives in the military.

We understand that the proposed new government ethics rules would prohibit those federal employees from attending the AUVSI trade show for free simply because AUVSI itself engages in some lobbying. From our perspective, this proposed rule would be detrimental to the government's interest. The purpose for those employees to attend the AUVSI trade show is to meet companies like ours, not to become involved in the interests of the trade association itself. To deny them the ability to attend without paying (which is a significant deterrent for federal employees), would inhibit the government's ability to learn about valuable new technologies.

The fact that AUVSI provides free access to the trade show on the one hand, while engaging in some lobbying on the other hand, does not in any way impact the views of the attending federal employees, and they are not exposed to AUVSI lobbying messaging. They are there simply to do their job of scouting out technologies of benefit to the government.

In sum, I believe it would be a significant counterproductive move to prohibit federal employees from "accepting" free attendance at an industry trade show that they want to attend to better perform their job.

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