



AUVSI Board Names Heather Lee Acting President and CEO Effective Oct. 1 as Michael Robbins Plans Sept. 30 Departure

Robbins to become President and CEO of the Semiconductor Industry Association as Board launches search

ARLINGTON, VA, UNITED STATES, August 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), the world's largest trade association for uncrewed systems, robotics, and autonomous technologies, today announced that President and CEO Michael Robbins will depart the organization on September 30 to become President and CEO of the Semiconductor Industry Association (SIA). Heather Lee, AUVSI's Chief Operating Officer, will serve as Acting President and CEO effective October 1. The AUVSI Board of Directors has launched a search for AUVSI's next President and CEO.

"Michael's selection to lead SIA is a testament to the profile AUVSI has built on Capitol Hill, the Executive Branch, and across the industry," said John "JC" Coffey, Chairperson of the AUVSI Board of Directors and Executive Director at Cherokee Nation Federal. "He came up through this organization's advocacy ranks and has been a transformative leader for AUVSI. I want to thank him for the vision, energy, and stability he brought to the organization. Having anchored AUVSI's operations and organizational growth for years, Heather Lee has the Board's complete confidence to guide our continued forward progress."

Robbins joined AUVSI in 2020 as Chief Advocacy Officer before being named President and CEO in 2024, building AUVSI's advocacy operation into one of the most active and effective in Washington, DC. That foundation is designed to carry the organization well beyond the leadership transition next month. The organization's high-performing team, advocacy committees, programs, and coalition efforts – across defense, commercial drones, and ground and maritime systems – remain fully staffed and engaged, with no change to AUVSI's current priorities or pace of work.

As the operational backbone of AUVSI, Heather Lee oversees engagement, industry development, strategic programs, meetings, finance, and administration – and was instrumental in shaping strategy around AUVSI's flagship event, XPONENTIAL, and its Green UAS program. To transform the future of autonomy, she combines big-picture strategy with tactical execution and a healthy sense of urgency, driving every team toward its most ambitious goals. Lee brings nearly two decades of leadership experience from CTIA – The Wireless Association, where she

led the organization's flagship event, Super Mobility.

"Michael built this team to last, and that's exactly what you're seeing right now," said Lee, AUVSI's Chief Operating Officer and incoming Acting President and CEO. "Our policy priorities, committee structure, and government relations strategy remain through this transition. October 1 doesn't change how we operate. Our members, Hill offices, and agency partners should expect to see the same level of engagement, the same responsiveness, and the same results they've come to expect from AUVSI."

The transition reflects both the strength of the organization Robbins helped build and the depth of the team that will carry it forward. Under his leadership, AUVSI reinforced its role as a trusted voice for the autonomous systems industry, expanded its policy influence, testified before the U.S. Congress eight times, and deepened its engagement with its members, policymakers, and partners across the ecosystem. AUVSI enters the transition from a position of strength, and the Board's search process will focus on identifying a leader who can build on that foundation and guide the association through its next phase of growth.

"AUVSI has given me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I'm proud of what our team has built together," said Robbins. "To our members, our committee volunteers, and everyone across the industry who put their trust in AUVSI and in me – thank you. I will leave this organization with a deep bench of policy and operational talent, and I have complete confidence in Heather and the rest of the leadership team to keep AUVSI's momentum going. I look forward to the industry's continued success, and I remain an enduring champion and advocate for its strategic importance."

Robbins will remain fully engaged in his current role through September 30, ensuring a seamless handoff as Lee steps in as Acting President and CEO on October 1. AUVSI's Board of Directors is committed to a thorough and efficient search process to identify the association's next President and CEO.

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About AUVSI

The Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the uncrewed systems, autonomy, and robotics industry. AUVSI advocates for policy, education, and innovation that support safe and productive use of uncrewed systems.

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