



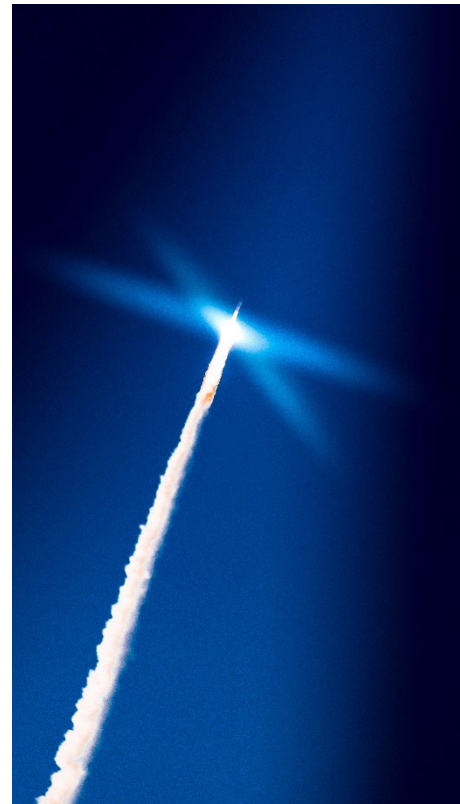
Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

By the time you read this, the Artemis II mission will be roughly 5,000 miles from the Moon - nearly the distance between Los Angeles and Tokyo. There were many august quotes before and after last week's Artemis II launch, but an unidentified boy interviewed by CNN likely summed it up best: "we're going back to the friggin' moon!" You can track the mission [here](#).

Back on Earth, NASA's gaze is fixed on the Moon, the Artemis program overhaul and the transition to commercial space stations, even as the U.S. and Russian governments explore extending the ISS mission beyond 2028. The ESA is recalibrating its role in the Artemis program after the announced suspension of the Lunar Gateway, and the U.S. - China space race is heating up in some unlikely places as both countries eye the Dominican Republic's emerging space infrastructure.

All this and more in this edition of Akin's Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update.



Artemis II launch photo courtesy of Charlie Wilkins.

On The Hill

Articles and Quotes

Top Space Lawmaker on Moon Base, Artemis Plans (*Payload Space*)

Rep. Mike Haridopolos (R-FL), Chairman of the House SST Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, said lawmakers are broadly supportive of NASA's updated Artemis strategy, including plans to establish a lunar base, increase the cadence of uncrewed lunar missions beginning in 2027 and land astronauts on the moon by 2028. He noted that members of Congress are rallying around the goal of a sustained U.S. presence on the lunar surface and view it as a

steppingstone for future Mars missions.

Congress Hears That Private Industry Is Ready to Launch Its Own Space Stations (*The Well News*)

On March 25, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and aerospace industry officials told the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee (SST) on Space and Aeronautics that commercial companies are preparing to assume a larger role in low Earth orbit (LEO) operations, including developing and operating private space stations to replace the aging International Space Station (ISS), which is expected to be deorbited by 2031. During the **hearing** led by Rep. Mike Haridopolos (R-FL), officials said that NASA could transition from operating its own station to becoming a customer of commercially owned platforms, potentially reducing annual costs and reallocating funding toward lunar and deep space exploration. Officials also noted that commercial partnerships are already playing a role in broader U.S. space efforts, including lunar development, as policymakers highlighted the importance of maintaining U.S. leadership amid continued international competition.

GOP Moving Forward with New Reconciliation Bill, with Money for Defense (*Breaking Defense*)

Senate Republicans are advancing plans for a second reconciliation bill focused in part on increasing defense funding, according to Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Lawmakers said the proposal is intended to bolster military capabilities and homeland security, though total funding levels remain under discussion, with figures ranging from hundreds of billions of dollars to broader defense budget targets for fiscal year (FY) 2027. Previous reconciliation legislation approved roughly \$150 billion for defense priorities, including modernization programs and industrial base investments, with funds expected to be executed in FY 2026. Congressional leaders, including Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL), have indicated interest in allocating additional resources in a new package, while the proposal may also include funding for other federal priorities as negotiations continue.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced **a bill to require the Chief of Space Operations to submit a feasibility report on expanding the Multinational Force Operation Olympic Defender (S. 4201)**.

Please find our Space Legislation Tracker **here**.

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(March 23, 2026 - April 10, 2026)

On March 24, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held a [hearing](#) to examine low-cost munitions.

On March 24, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held a [hearing](#) on arms control and international security programs at the State Department.

On March 24, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) held a [business meeting](#).

On March 25, the House Armed Services (HASC) Strategic Forces Subcommittee held a [hearing](#) on national security space programs and activities.

On March 25, the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) held a [hearing](#) on arms control and international security programs at the State Department.

On March 25, the House SST Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics held a [hearing](#) titled “The Future of Low Earth Orbit: From the ISS to Commercial Platforms.”

On March 26, SASC held open and closed [hearings](#) to examine the posture of United States Space Command and United States Strategic Command in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

Congress is currently in recess.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

[NASA to Spend \\$20 Billion on Moon Base](#) (*Politico*)

NASA plans to invest \$20 billion over the next seven years to develop a lunar base as part of its broader effort to return astronauts to the Moon and expand deep space exploration, according to Administrator Jared Isaacman. The agency expects total spending on the effort to reach approximately \$30 billion over the next decade, supporting dozens of missions to build out lunar infrastructure. As part of the shift in strategy, NASA is suspending the Gateway lunar-orbiting space station and redirect resources toward surface operations, while working with international partners to adapt existing contributions. Officials also outlined plans to increase the frequency of crewed lunar missions, potentially to every six months, and to maintain multiple launch providers to support access to the Moon.

[Office of Space Commerce Releases Updated Mission Authorization Proposal for Novel Space Activities](#) (*The National Law Review*)

The Office of Space Commerce (OSC) released an updated proposal to establish a voluntary “one-stop” mission authorization process for novel commercial space activities, introducing a new “Space Commerce Certification” framework intended to streamline regulatory approval. The proposal would apply to activities not fully covered by existing regimes, including satellite servicing, lunar missions, commercial space stations and nuclear space applications, and would involve coordinated interagency review with participation from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and commercial remote sensing regulators. Officials said the approach is designed to address regulatory gaps and provide a more flexible, scalable framework as new space activities emerge, and the agency is currently seeking industry feedback on the proposal.

Vulcan Grounding Could Impact Multiple Space Force, NRO Satellite Launches (*Breaking Defense*)

The Vulcan rocket has been grounded following a booster anomaly during a recent mission, prompting the U.S. Space Force (USSF) to assess potential impacts on upcoming national security launches. Officials said several near-term missions could face delays or reassignment, including military communications satellites, missile warning systems and space domain awareness payloads, as well as launches supporting the National Reconnaissance Office. An interagency team is reviewing the anomaly and determining corrective actions, and no additional launches will proceed until the investigation is complete.

Pentagon Eyes Canceling ‘Troubled’ GPS Ground System (*Air & Space Forces Magazine*)

USSF is considering canceling a long-delayed program to develop a next-generation ground control system for its newest global positioning system (GPS) satellites following persistent software defects and testing setbacks. Officials said the program has faced years of cost growth and schedule delays, and the service is now evaluating alternatives, including further upgrades to the existing ground system currently used to operate the GPS constellation.

Federal Agency Space News

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA Unveils Initiatives to Achieve America’s National Space Policy (March 24, 2026)

NASA Research Proposes Technology to Seek Earth-Like Exoplanets (March 24, 2026)

NASA to Unveil Complete Roman Telescope, Host Media Briefing (March 26, 2026)

NASA Tech and Science Bound for Low Earth Orbit on Commercial Launch (March 27, 2026)

Liftoff! NASA Launches Astronauts on Historic Artemis Moon Mission (April 1, 2026)

Office of the Director of National Intelligence

[DNI Gabbard Announces Largest-Ever Intelligence Community Cybersecurity Investment and Modernization Effort](#) (March 26, 2026)

Office of Space Commerce

[OSC to Co-Host 5th Annual Cybersecurity Open Forum - April 30](#) (March 23, 2026)

[OSC Participates in 'U.S. Space Leadership' Policy Briefing](#) (March 24, 2026)

[OSC Releases Updated Mission Authorization Proposal](#) (March 24, 2026)

[Director Jordan Joins Fireside Discussion at Space Diplomacy Forum](#) (March 31, 2026)

U.S Department of Defense

[Joint Statement Reaffirming a Shared Commitment to Defense Industrial Resilience](#) (March 20, 2026)

U.S. Space Force

[US Space Force's EPS-R Achieves Operational Acceptance, Extending Secure Arctic SATCOM Capabilities Into the 2030s](#) (March 20, 2026)

[Space Launch Delta 45 Supports Historic Artemis II Mission](#) (April 2, 2026)

International

Articles & Quotes

[ESA to Decide by June on Europe's Gateway Contributions](#) (*SpaceNews*)

The European Space Agency (ESA) is expected to decide by June on how to adjust its contributions to the Artemis program following NASA's decision to halt development of the lunar Gateway. ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher said the agency is assessing options for repurposing or modifying existing contributions, including the European Service Module for the Orion spacecraft and Gateway-related elements such as habitation, refueling and communications systems. ESA is working with NASA and international partners to evaluate technical changes, funding allocations, and future roles for European industry and astronauts within the revised Artemis architecture. A formal proposal outlining ESA's path forward is expected to be presented to member states at the ESA Council in June.

[Russia, US Discuss Extending International Space Station Service Beyond 2028](#) (*CGTN*)

Officials from Russia and the United States are discussing a potential extension of operations for the ISS beyond its currently planned timelines, with existing agreements covering operations

through 2028 and U.S. systems certified through 2030. According to Sergei Krikalev of Roscosmos, ongoing talks are focused on enabling a smoother transition from the ISS to future orbital platforms, including the potential assembly and deployment of new station components from the ISS itself. Russian officials also indicated plans to begin deploying a national orbital station in 2028, alongside development of a next-generation crewed spacecraft, as both countries evaluate the future of low Earth orbit infrastructure and continuity of human spaceflight operations.

Dominican Republic Is Next Frontier in US-China Space Race (*Bloomberg*)

A planned commercial spaceport in the Dominican Republic is being positioned as part of broader competition between the United States and China for influence in Latin America's growing space sector. The \$600 million facility, expected to begin construction later this year, is intended to support increasing demand for heavy-lift launches and expand regional access to orbital capabilities. The project comes amid expanding Chinese space-related infrastructure in the region, including satellite tracking stations and other ground-based assets, which U.S. policymakers have identified as having potential dual-use applications. Officials in the Dominican Republic have framed the spaceport as part of broader economic development efforts, while analysts note that Latin America is emerging as a more active region in the global space economy, with new launch infrastructure and partnerships shaping both commercial opportunities and strategic dynamics.

Check out below for comment opportunities, requests for proposals, notices of proposed rulemaking and a look at the week ahead in space events:

Comment Opportunities (RFIs)

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Transportation

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 8, 2026

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Destination

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 8, 2026

Commercial Satellite Communications (COMSATCOM) for USSOCOM J6

Department of Defense

Close Date: April 9, 2026

National Space Test and Training Complex (NSTTC) Innovative Technology & Engineering - Space Test and Range (NITE-STAR)

Department of Defense

Close Date: April 17, 2026

Lunar Science and Technology Payloads for Expanded Lunar Landing Opportunities

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 23, 2026

Enabling Commercial Lunar Transportation to Support a Sustained Lunar Base

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 23, 2026

Advancement of ‘Science as a Service’ for NASA and Commercial Partners

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 23, 2026

Capability Demonstrations & Supply Chain Challenges for NASA Moon Base Development

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 23, 2026

Mission Integration Prime for Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO) Series Satellites

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: May 4, 2026

Private Sector Participation in Domestic and International Events on Spaceflight Safety, Responsible Practices and Commercial Space

Department of State

Close Date: December 31, 2026

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Johnson Space Center Multiple Award Construction Contract (JMACC)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 6, 2026

Solicitation for COMET Defense Intelligence Agency Missile and Space Intelligence Center

Department of Defense

Close Date: April 10, 2026

Near Earth Orbit Network Program’s Sounder for Microwave-Based Applications

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: June 1, 2026

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

Beyond Earth Working Group Report Series: Minding the LEO Gap and the Future for Commercial Space Stations

BEI

April 7, 2026

Assured PNT Summit

Defense Strategies Institute

April 7-8, 2026

5th IAA Conference on Space Situational Awareness

IAA

April 7-9, 2026

Securing Space: Threats, Intelligence and Warfighting Advantage

INSA

April 8, 2026

41st Space Symposium

Space Foundation

April 13-16, 2026

Earth and Space 2026 Conference

ASCE

April 13-16, 2026

MEPAG Hybrid Meeting #43

MEPAG

April 21-23, 2026

2026 Spring Meeting

LSIC

April 28-30, 2026

GEOINT 2026

USGIF

May 3-6, 2026

AbSciCon 2026

AbSciCon

May 17-22, 2026

2026 ASCEND

AIAA

May 19-21, 2026

Learn more about our Space Law and Policy practice.

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