



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

As the U.S. government shutdown continues to drag on, you could be forgiven for thinking work on domestic space policy hasn't slowed. The FCC launched a proposal to streamline the satellite licensing process, DoD is looking to boost space resilience with "government owned, commercially operated" satellites and there may be a reorganization in Space Force's future. Elsewhere in the world (and out of it), a new Japanese unmanned cargo ship is on its way to the ISS, ESA is planning for greater space resilience and the Philippines and Malaysia signed on to the Artemis Accords, becoming the 58th and 59th countries to do so.

Lastly, we hope you'll join us November 20 for a webinar about the impact of relaxed EPA regulations on commercial space launches. This will be the first episode of a regular series where Akin attorneys and industry leaders explore the novel legal developments affecting the commercial space industry. Click [here](#) to reserve your spot!

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

Akin Spotlight

Akin's [Trump Executive Order Tracker](#) provides a high-level overview of executive orders published by the new administration. These orders cut across dozens of industries and topics. The Tracker is updated as orders and Akin's in-depth analysis of specific orders are published.

Please visit Akin's [Trump Executive Order Overview](#) to view a matrix of the orders.

On The Hill

Articles and Quotes

[Lawmakers Sweat the Shutdown: 'Impacts Are Really Starting to Pile Up'](#) (Politico)

As the federal shutdown enters its fifth week, lawmakers remain gridlocked over fiscal year (FY)

2026 appropriations, with national parks shuttered, air traffic operations strained and defense funding in limbo. Senate Democrats continue to reject GOP stopgap bills unless paired with protections for expiring health care subsidies, while Republicans refuse to negotiate broader deals until the government is reopened. Appropriators on both sides express frustration that partisan divisions are stalling progress on critical FY26 bills—including defense and energy—despite some bipartisan momentum in subcommittees. House leadership has kept the chamber in recess, prompting criticism that the prolonged shutdown is undercutting efforts to finalize appropriations and sustain basic federal operations.

Lawmakers Say Shutdown Has Delayed Secretive New JATM Missile *(Air & Space Magazine)*

The ongoing government shutdown has reportedly delayed the highly classified Joint Advanced Tactical Missile (JATM) program by three months, raising concerns among House Armed Services Committee members about its impact on air combat readiness and efforts to counter China's long-range missile capabilities. The delay, disclosed in a Republican fact sheet, underscores broader shutdown-related disruptions to defense procurement, including halted contract activity and deferred maintenance and training. The setback comes amid broader debates over procurement priorities, with Air Force and Navy officials expressing differing timelines for transitioning from legacy systems like the Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) to next-generation platforms such as JATM. Lawmakers warned that continued inaction could undermine progress on vital defense technologies.

Defense Hawks Pan New Pentagon Memo *(Punchbowl News)*

A new Pentagon directive requiring all communications with Congress to be routed through the Office of Legislative Affairs has drawn sharp criticism from lawmakers, who view it as a threat to congressional oversight. Senators from both parties, particularly those on appropriations and armed services panels, warned that the policy could restrict routine, essential dialogue with military leaders, complicating legislative work on reprogramming, compliance and appropriations enforcement. Lawmakers argued the move effectively imposes a gag order on the military and creates a bureaucratic chokepoint just as Congress is trying to finalize the FY26 defense spending bills amid a prolonged shutdown. Sens. Chris Coons (D-DE), Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) all pushed back on the policy's chilling effect, noting that day-to-day communication with the Department of Defense (DoD) personnel is essential for fulfilling Congress' constitutional role in military funding and oversight demonstrate to Congress that complex space science missions can be executed responsibly without sacrificing ambition.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) **introduced** the DOE and NASA Interagency Research Coordination Act (**S. 3029**) which provides for Department of Energy (DOE) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) research and development coordination.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) **introduced** the National Security Biotechnology Workforce Training Act ([H.R. 5770](#)) which establishes biotechnology workforce training programs for DoD personnel.

Please find our Space Legislation Tracker [here](#).

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(October 27, 2025 - November 7, 2025)

On October 28, the Senate Committee on Armed Services (SASC) held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

On October 30, SASC held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

[FCC Proposes ‘Licensing Assembly Line’ to Accelerate Satellite Approvals](#) (*SpaceNews*)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has proposed sweeping reforms to its satellite licensing process under a new “Space Modernization for the 21st Century” rulemaking, led by Chairman Brendan Carr. Central to the proposal is a modular “licensing assembly line” intended to replace the outdated Part 25 rules with a new Part 100 framework that reflects the scale and speed of the current commercial space economy. The proposal, now open for public comment, outlines clearer fast-track eligibility, streamlined processes for non-geostationary orbit (NGSO) constellations, eased financial bond requirements for low-risk applicants, 20-year license terms, and expanded authority for minor modifications and nationwide Earth-station licensing. The FCC will also mandate the sharing of space situational awareness data to enhance orbital safety and continue its “Delete, Delete, Delete” initiative to eliminate obsolete regulations. The Satellite Industry Association praised the reforms for expediting approvals and optimizing spectrum use, while the FCC also advanced a parallel rule to ease siting for Earth stations in high-frequency bands to support both satellite and 5G deployments. The effort is part of Carr’s broader “Space Month” initiative to ensure U.S. regulatory leadership amid global competition, especially from China.

[Pentagon Turns to ‘Government-Owned, Commercially-Operated’ Satellites Amid Conflict Risks](#) (*SpaceNews*)

DoD is shifting toward a model of “government-owned, commercially-operated” satellites to bolster resilience in contested space environments. Faced with increased threats to traditional

large military satellites, including anti-satellite weapons, jamming and other disruptions, the United States is working with commercial operators to deploy smaller, more numerous and flexible platforms. These arrangements allow the government to retain ownership of critical assets while leveraging commercial agility in operations, launch and maintenance. The approach is intended to reduce cost, improve replenishment speed and mitigate the risk of single-point failures, thereby enhancing space system survivability in future conflicts, and it promises to open new opportunities for commercial space enterprises.

Sean Duffy Irks White House as Drama over Top Job at NASA Seeps into Public View *(CNN)*

Internal White House tensions have surfaced amid prolonged uncertainty over the top job at NASA, with frustration reportedly mounting over Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy's handling of the process. Duffy, who also serves as NASA's acting administrator, has privately suggested that the agency might be better positioned within the Department of Transportation, raising concerns among officials already wary of his direct outreach to President Trump and circumvention of standard vetting protocols. Although Duffy has participated in interviews, including with a previously withdrawn nominee, White House aides continue to view that individual as a leading contender, despite earlier objections linked to political donations. The personnel drama has drawn unwanted public attention, including criticism from outside stakeholders and online sparring with a major contractor. While President Trump has signaled support for Duffy, officials acknowledge that the space leadership decision is not an immediate priority, leaving the timing of a formal nomination uncertain.

Pentagon Nominee on Consolidating Space Force and NRO: 'Open to All Options' *(Air & Space Forces)*

At his Senate confirmation hearing, the nominee to lead U.S. space policy expressed openness to reorganizing national security space functions, including potential consolidation of Space Force and National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) acquisition efforts. He cited past dual-hatting arrangements between DoD and the intelligence community as historically effective and worthy of reconsideration. While not endorsing a specific merger, he urged policy-makers to weigh all options to improve efficiency and address growing space and missile threats posed by China and Russia. He emphasized the importance of the Golden Dome initiative and greater integration of space-based capabilities to maintain U.S. leadership in the domain.

Golden Dome Funding Lags as Industry Partners Line Up *(Washington Times)*

Despite bipartisan interest on Capitol Hill, executive branch actions are drawing scrutiny over the delayed implementation of the Golden Dome missile defense initiative. Although the White House secured \$24.5 billion in advance appropriations for the program through H.R. 1, none of the funding has been obligated, and sources indicate that the Office of Management and Budget continues to hold the funds. National security officials, including the Space Force general leading the effort, recently briefed the Senate Armed Services Committee on classified components of the program, but broader transparency remains lacking. Experts warn that the administration's decision to seek funding without a defined acquisition plan or public program requirements has hamstrung oversight and created ambiguity around execution authority. Meanwhile, critics note that the administration's control over disbursement timelines and spending flexibility could allow it to shape the program's trajectory behind closed doors, raising concerns about strategic

coherence, contractor accountability and congressional intent.

Federal Agency Space News

No new federal agency space news.

International

Articles & Quotes

Philippines Joins Artemis Accords to Strengthen Space Ties with U.S. *(Daily Tribune)*

The Philippines and Malaysia have joined the Artemis Accords, becoming the 58th and 59th countries to endorse the U.S.-led framework for responsible civil space exploration. The announcement builds on expanding bilateral space ties between the United States and the Philippines, which held their first space dialogue in 2024 and have explored cooperation on satellite programs, maritime domain awareness and the potential establishment of a Landsat ground station. The new signatories reaffirmed commitments to transparency, sustainability and peaceful use of space under the Outer Space Treaty and related conventions, aligning themselves more closely with U.S. civil and commercial space norms.

ESA Outlines Plans for Space Security Program *(SpaceNews)*

The European Space Agency (ESA) has unveiled the €1.2 billion European Resilience from Space (ERS) initiative ahead of its ministerial conference in late November, signaling a major push to strengthen Europe's autonomous space-based security capabilities amid growing threats from Russia and declining reliance on U.S. defense support. ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher emphasized the need to unify fragmented national assets under a coordinated European framework, combining Earth observation, communications and navigation technologies. The program's initial focus includes pooling underutilized national imaging satellites, launching new constellations for near-real-time monitoring and integrating secure communications via the IRIS² network. While the plan draws from past ESA-European Commission partnerships such as Galileo and Copernicus, long-term funding through the European Union's (EU) next Multiannual Financial Framework remains uncertain. Aschbacher acknowledged that full strategic autonomy will be difficult, noting that ESA systems will still rely on U.S. components subject to export controls.

Japan Successfully Launches New Cargo Spacecraft to Deliver Supplies to ISS *(ABC News)*

Japan has successfully launched its most advanced H3 rocket, delivering a newly developed unmanned cargo spacecraft to orbit for its first resupply mission to the International Space Station (ISS). The HTV-X1, which replaces Japan's previous Kounotori vehicle, offers expanded payload capacity, power-supply capabilities for lab samples and extended mission duration. If all goes as planned, it will arrive at the ISS within days, with Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui scheduled to assist its capture. The launch marks the debut of the H3 rocket's most powerful

variant and reinforces Japan's ambitions to maintain an autonomous, reliable space transport capability that can compete globally. With six consecutive successful flights following an initial 2023 failure, the H3 program is now central to Japan's national space and security strategy.

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)

Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Facility Commercial Utilization

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: November 28, 2025

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Ames Research Center Facilities Support Services II (AFSS II)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: November 14, 2025

Proposal for Lease of the Flight Research Facility (Hangar) at Glenn Research Center (GRC)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: December 13, 2025

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

Space Settlement Summit

NSS

November 3-4, 2025

Security for Space Systems (3S) Conference

ESA

November 4-6, 2025

3rd Annual Space Economy Summit 2025

Economist

November 5-6, 2025

2025 LSIC Fall Meeting

LSIC

November 5-6, 2025

Joint Space Operations Summit

DSI

November 5-6, 2025

23rd Meeting of the Venus Exploration Analysis Group (VEXAG)

NASA

November 5-7, 2025

Space Vision 2025

SEDS

November 6-8, 2025

4th Annual Spacepower Security Forum

Mitchell Institute

November 13, 2025

Commercial Lunar Landscape And Policy Needs Conference

UNOOSA

November 17-18, 2025

2025 OPAG Meeting Virtual

OPAG

November 17-19, 2025

Space Tech Expo Europe

STEE

November 18-20, 2025

Faga Forum on Space Intelligence

Space Foundation

November 18, 2025

Cislunar Security Conference (CLSC)

JHUAPL

December 2-4, 2025

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