



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

The calendar may say we're in the August doldrums, but it seems no one in the space business is taking the summer off. In Washington, Congress continued to push back against President Trump's proposed NASA budget cuts, while the acting NASA Administrator unveiled plans to place a nuclear reactor on the moon and replace the ISS with a commercial space station by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, industry awaits the release of an Executive Order intended to slash regulation and accelerate growth in the commercial space industry.

Outside the U.S., Japan proposed international guidelines to track and remove space debris and China's commercial space industry accomplished a milestone with the first launch of a commercial-built Guowang satellite.

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

Senators Raise NASA Funding Concerns in Letter to Duffy (SpaceNews)

Six Senate Democrats, including Sens. Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla, sent a letter to Acting National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator Sean Duffy on August 1 raising alarm over the Trump administration's proposed 47% to NASA's science programs and reports that the agency has already frozen over \$100 million in fiscal year (FY) 2025 funding. The letter accuses the administration of undermining Congress's constitutional budget authority and warns that such actions may violate the Impoundment Control Act. Lawmakers also expressed concern about NASA's voluntary buyout program, which could reduce the civil servant workforce by nearly 20%. Duffy previously told Congress he would "follow the will of Congress" but emphasized the need to meet critical timelines. Senators requested formal answers by August 8.

Senate's \$852 Billion Defense Budget Saves Wedgetail, Keeps Space Force Flat (Air & Space Forces)

The Senate Appropriations Committee advanced a bipartisan \$852 billion defense spending bill for FY2026 on July 31, providing \$21 billion more than the Trump administration requested and preserving several key Air Force priorities. The bill allocates \$233 billion to the Department of the Air Force, nearly \$5 billion above the request, while holding Space Force funding flat at \$26 billion. Senators rejected the administration's plan to cancel the E-7 Wedgetail program, instead approving \$847 million to continue prototyping the airborne early warning aircraft. The bill also

adds funding for C-130Js, Compass Call aircraft, and an unnamed classified program. For Space Force, it includes \$500 million for the Space Development Agency's satellite constellation and \$105 million for commercial surveillance tech. With the House and Senate now \$21 billion apart on defense topline, final negotiations face a tight timeline before the fiscal year ends on September 30.

Senate Confirms Bratton for Space Vice Chief, Anderson to Lead AFRICOM (*Air & Space Forces*)

On July 31, the Senate confirmed Lt. Gen. Shawn Bratton as Vice Chief of Space Operations and Lt. Gen. Dagvin Anderson as Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), promoting both to four-star generals. Bratton, a former Air National Guard officer, most recently led Space Force strategy, requirements, and budgeting, and was instrumental in shaping the service's warfighting framework. He succeeds Gen. Michael Guetlein, now directing the Golden Dome missile defense initiative. Anderson becomes the first Airman to lead AFRICOM, previously commanded by Army and Marine generals. His appointment comes as AFRICOM intensifies air operations and amid ongoing discussions about potentially re-merging it with U.S. European Command. The Senate also confirmed Adm. Daryl Caudle as Chief of Naval Operations and Vice Adm. Frank Bradley to lead U.S. Special Operations Command. However, Gen. Thomas Bussiere's nomination to become Air Force Vice Chief of Staff remains pending until after the August recess.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

On July 25, 2025, Rep. Roger Williams (R-TX) **introduced** the INNOVATE Act (**H.R. 4777**), which aims to improve the SBIR and STTR programs under the Small Business Act.

On July 31, 2025, Sen. Ashley Moody (R-FL) introduced a bill to authorize the Administrator of NASA to conduct a pilot program for investment in infrastructure projects at the Kennedy Space Center and to establish the Infrastructure Investment Fund (**S. 2622**).

On July 31, 2025, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2026 (**S. 2572**) was reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Appropriations by a vote of 26-3, and was placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(July 28, 2025 - August 15, 2025)

On July 29, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) held a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters.

On July 30, SSCI held a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters

Also on July 30, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held an **executive session** to consider **S. 2351**, the Space Exploration Research **Act**.

On July 31, the Senate Appropriations Committee held a **markup** of the FY2026 Defense Appropriations **Act**.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

NASA to Announce Moves on Space Station, Lunar Reactor *(Politico)*

Transportation Secretary and interim NASA Administrator Sean Duffy will unveil accelerated plans this week to deploy a 100-kilowatt nuclear reactor on the Moon by 2030, marking his first major action since taking on the dual role. The directive, confirmed by internal documents, also pushes NASA to replace the International Space Station (ISS) with commercial alternatives before the end of the decade. Both initiatives align with President Trump's crewed spaceflight priorities and signal a more assertive posture in response to China and Russia's joint lunar ambitions. Despite deep proposed cuts to NASA's science portfolio, the White House budget increases human spaceflight funding for FY2026. Duffy's directive orders NASA to solicit industry proposals within 60 days and name a program lead, underscoring concerns that China could soon gain lunar dominance by establishing exclusion zones around its installations.

Why Industry Says Golden Dome's Biggest Challenge Isn't Missiles, It's Data Flow *(SpaceNews)*

As the Pentagon races to define the architecture of its ambitious Golden Dome missile defense initiative, industry leaders are warning that the program's biggest challenge is not interceptors or sensors, but the integration and flow of data across a sprawling, artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled network. Executives from Booz Allen Hamilton, L3Harris, and Arcfield emphasized that command and control will be the most complex element of the system, particularly as it seeks to defend against fast-moving threats like hypersonic missiles. AI will be essential for prioritizing targets and enabling real-time responses, but leaders stressed the need for secure, custom-built models and significant investment in workforce development. With scope and requirements still unclear, companies are urging the Pentagon to clarify its goals while leaving room for innovation ahead of the August 7 industry summit.

Draft Trump EO Would Loosen Commercial Space Regs, Citing National Security

Links *(Breaking Defense)*

A draft executive order (EO) from President Trump would significantly loosen commercial space regulations to accelerate U.S. space activity for national security and economic competitiveness. The EO aims to streamline environmental reviews, modify FAA Part 450 launch rules, and transfer oversight of novel space activities from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Commerce. It directs federal agencies to expedite spaceport development by waiving requirements under laws like NEPA and the Endangered Species Act. The EO would also reorganize space oversight roles within DOT and Commerce to elevate commercial space within agency leadership. Industry has expressed optimism but noted the EO has not been shared for feedback. While Commerce would be tasked with designing a new regulatory regime within 150 days, legal experts caution that full implementation requires Congressional action. The draft order aligns with the administration's broader push to boost commercial launch cadence and develop novel on-orbit capabilities critical to defense and economic interests.

Federal Agency Space News

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA's Artemis Crew Trains in Moonbound Orion Ahead of Mission (August 4, 2025)

Crew-11 Docks to Station Aboard SpaceX Dragon (August 2, 2025)

Constructing NASA Infrastructure (August 1, 2025)

NASA Invites Proposals to Lease Aircraft Hangar in Cleveland (July 31, 2025)

U.S. Space Force

RESOLUTE SPACE 25: Space Force Aggressors Aim To Stress, Test Friendly Forces (August 1, 2025)

CMSSF strengthens Allied Partnerships During First European Tour (July 30, 2025)

Federal Communications Commission

FCC Streamlines Space Processes, Boosts Innovation (August 7, 2025)

International

Articles & Quotes

[Japan Launches International Rules for Space Debris Removal](#) (*Innovation News Network*)

Japan has launched a major international initiative to establish legal and procedural frameworks for space debris removal by March 2026, aiming to address the growing threat orbital debris poses to satellites, the ISS, and future space operations. With over 54,000 tracked objects and millions of smaller fragments in orbit, Japan's strategy includes object identification, safe disposal mechanisms and proposals for UN COPUOS consideration. The effort seeks binding global standards, especially as commercial satellite constellations expand. Japan's plan builds on past missions by JAXA and Astroscale, and complements global efforts like ESA's ClearSpace-1 and China's robotic and laser-based debris removal tests.

[The Space Station's Russian Segment Won't Stop Leaking Air](#) (*Gizmodo*)

The Russian Zvezda module on the ISS continues to leak air despite years of repair efforts. Roscosmos recently confirmed that while the latest attempts reduced the leakage rate, the problem persists. The leak, first reported in 2019, has doubled in severity over time and was deemed a high-risk issue by NASA. Although a June pressure signal gave hope that the leak was sealed, long-term monitoring disproved that. Agencies are considering sealing off the Zvezda module permanently, which would reduce cargo docking capacity but not compromise core station operations.

[China's Long March 12 Rocket Marks Major Milestone in Satellite Launches](#) (*Daily Galaxy*)

China's Long March 12 rocket successfully launched a new batch of Guowang satellites on August 4, 2025, marking a major milestone in its effort to build a global satellite internet constellation. The mission was the first Guowang launch to include a commercial satellite manufacturer, underscoring growing private sector participation in China's space industry. Designed to rival SpaceX's Starlink, the Guowang network will deliver high-speed, low-latency internet across the globe, particularly targeting underserved areas. The Long March 12, a two-stage, liquid-fueled rocket, is central to China's strategy, with this launch being its second successful flight since debuting in late 2024.

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)

[CIS Capability Studies IV: Lunar Trunkline Communication Architectures and Mars End-to-End Communication Service Architectures](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 13, 2025

[Protected Tactical SATCOM - Global \(PTS-G\) RFP](#)

Department of Defense

Close Date: August 12, 2025

Commercial SmallSat Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) On-Ramp 2

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: August 29, 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

Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee (AAAC)

AAAC

August 15, 2025

39th Annual Small Satellite Conference

SmallSat

August 10-13, 2025

Glenn Space Technology Symposium

AAS

September 8-10, 2025

Outer Space Security Conference

UNIDIR

September 9-10, 2025

2025 EMER-GEN Conference

AMOS & SGAC

September 14-16, 2025

NASA EXMAG Meeting

NASA

September 15-17

World Space Business Week

Novaspace

September 15-17

Space Defense and Security Summit

SDSS

September 16-17

2025 AMOS Conference

AMOS

September 16-19

Space Logistics Conference

SMG

September 18-19

UNL Space Law Conference

UNL

September 18

2025 Air, Space, Cyber Convention

AFA

September 22-24

2025 International Astronautical Congress

IAF

September 29-October 3

International Observe the Moon Night

NASA

October 4, 2025

The Day of Action to Save NASA Science

The Planetary Society

October 4-6, 2025

International Mars Society Convention

The Mars Society

October 9-11, 2025

9th Interstellar Symposium

IRG/IAA

October 12-15, 2025

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Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact:

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