



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

The longest government shutdown in U.S. history is behind us, and Congress is leaning hard into its NASA and Department of Defense (also referred to as the Department of War) oversight roles. Jared Isaacman is once again the nominee for NASA Administrator, though his leaked plan to streamline the agency has raised eyebrows.

FCC Commissioner Gomez expressed concerns about the waning U.S. influence in global satellite talks and the U.K. and Germany accused Russian of satellite skullduggery.

***One quick note:** Akin's webinar on the impact of relaxed environmental regulations on the commercial space launch industry, originally scheduled for November 20, has been rescheduled to December 3. Click [here](#) to reserve your spot. 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.*

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

Longest Government Shutdown in History Ends After 43 Days *(Space Policy Online)*

The U.S. federal government's 43-day shutdown—the longest in the nation's history—ended on November 12, 2025, when the House approved the Senate-passed funding legislation and President Donald Trump signed it into law. The new law provides full-year funding for three of the twelve appropriations bills (covering agencies such as Agriculture, Military Construction-Veterans Affairs and the Legislative Branch) while extending funding for the remaining nine, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), only through January 30, 2026. The shutdown had centered on a standoff: Democrats refused to support a continuing resolution unless it included an extension of the enhanced subsidies under the Affordable Care Act, and Republicans resisted adding that extension as part of the funding deal. The measure also ensures back-pay for federal workers, reverses reductions-in-force during the shutdown and reinstates those affected since October 1.

Top Science Committee Democrat Calls for Halt to Goddard Facility Closures *(SpaceNews)*

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Science Committee, sent a sharply worded letter to Acting NASA Administrator Sean Duffy on November 10 demanding an immediate halt to laboratory and facility closures at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Lofgren raised alarm that closures underway during the government shutdown, including of a propulsion lab critical to the Roman Space Telescope, were occurring without adequate technical justification, risking major mission delays or failures. She cited reports from union sources that over 100 labs across 13 buildings were being shut down, potentially mishandling millions of dollars in equipment, in a process she called "haphazard" and potentially in violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act. Lofgren rejected NASA's assertion that the closures align with a long-term master plan and warned that if essential facilities are shuttered without replacement, congressional oversight and legal challenges may follow. She requested a written assurance from Duffy within 24 hours that all closure activities are paused and said she will ask the NASA Inspector General to investigate whether the actions comply with laws, regulations and agency policy.

Defense Hawks Seethe Over a Failure to Communicate *(Punchbowl News)*

Tensions between Congressional defense hawks and the Pentagon have escalated over the past few weeks as lawmakers criticized the Department of Defense (DoD) for withholding information, disregarding legislative mandates and failing to consult on sensitive military operations. Senate Armed Services Committee Chair Roger Wicker publicly rebuked DoD policy chief Elbridge Colby during two hearings and accused the department of ignoring statutory requirements—particularly regarding recent maritime strikes and plans to reduce the U.S. troop presence in Romania. Wicker and ranking member Jack Reed also cited DoD's failure to submit required execution orders and provide timely updates on the use of \$150 billion in defense supplemental funding, despite specific deadlines written into law. The Pentagon defended its congressional engagement efforts, but frustration persists among lawmakers who argue that informing Congress after the fact does not satisfy legal obligations to consult. The conflict reflects growing scrutiny of the executive branch's unilateral decision-making in national security matters.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

No new legislation noticed.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(November 3, 2025 - November 21, 2025)

On November 4, the Senate Committee on Armed Services (SASC) held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

On November 4, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) held a closed [briefing](#) on intelligence matters.

On November 5, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation (CST) held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

On November 6, Senate CST held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

On November 6, SASC held a [hearing](#) to consider nominations.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

[Isaacman's Second Chance](#) (*The Space Review*)

President Trump's decision to renominate Jared Isaacman as NASA Administrator marks a dramatic return to a contentious personnel saga that has played out across multiple branches of government and within the broader space policy community. Isaacman, whose initial nomination was withdrawn due to concerns over his ties to Elon Musk, reemerged as a frontrunner after months of behind-the-scenes advocacy and the apparent collapse of alternative candidates. The executive branch's revived push to install Isaacman comes amid efforts to consolidate space policy around clear commercial priorities, as outlined in Isaacman's leaked "Project Athena" memo, which proposes streamlining NASA bureaucracy, canceling legacy programs like the Space Launch System and Gateway and leaning heavily on commercial partnerships. The White House's

renewed commitment to Isaacman, despite political headwinds and mounting scrutiny from Congress, signals a bold vision for transforming NASA into a more commercially driven agency aligned with Trump's broader "America First in Space" strategy.

FCC Commissioner Warns U.S. Influence on Satellite Spectrum Debates Could

Wane (*SpaceNews*)

At the Economist Space Summit, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Anna Gomez warned that recent executive branch actions, such as the dismantling of USAID, have diminished U.S. soft power and jeopardized its ability to build international coalitions on satellite spectrum issues ahead of the 2027 World Radiocommunication Conference. She cited growing Chinese influence and reduced U.S. diplomatic engagement as key factors behind recent U.S. setbacks, including a failed push to increase power limits for non-geostationary satellites. Gomez emphasized that American leadership in space depends on restoring global partnerships and institutional cooperation, noting that isolationism and internal resource constraints at the FCC risk undermining both domestic regulatory capacity and international standing.

New Report Urges DoD to Boost PNT Investments for Golden Dome (*MeriTalk*)

A new report from the National Security Space Association's Moorman Center warns that the effectiveness of the Pentagon's \$175 billion Golden Dome missile defense shield hinges on urgent upgrades to U.S. positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) infrastructure. Authored by James Frelk and released November 4, the report emphasizes that current PNT systems, primarily GPS, are vulnerable to jamming, spoofing and kinetic attacks, and thus insufficient to support Golden Dome's tracking and intercept capabilities. To bolster resilience, the report recommends the DoD pursue multi-orbit satellite architectures, enhance ground-based systems like Loran, and integrate commercial technologies such as television-signal-based positioning. It also calls on Congress to mandate a DoD gap analysis and a full funding plan to accelerate deployment of next-generation PNT solutions, cautioning that adversaries are developing countermeasures and U.S. deterrence will depend on rapid modernization.

Federal Agency Space News

Federal Aviation Administration

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy & FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford Outline Series of Proactive Actions to Maintain Safety in the National Air Space (November 6, 2025)

U.S. Department of Defense

Secretary of War Announces Acquisition Reform (November 10, 2025)

International

Articles & Quotes

European Companies to Fly Commercial Microgravity Mission in 2026 (*SpaceNews*)

Two European startups, Atmos Space Cargo and Space Cargo Unlimited, announced plans to launch a commercial microgravity mission in 2026 aboard a SpaceX rideshare flight, marking a key step in building an ISS-independent research ecosystem. The mission will use Atmos's Phoenix 2 orbital reentry vehicle to carry and return Space Cargo Unlimited's BentoBox platform, which autonomously manages microgravity experiments. The reusable spacecraft will reenter and land near the Azores after several weeks in orbit. This will be the first of seven planned missions running through 2027, with support from European public and private investment—including €27.5 million raised by Space Cargo Unlimited and €13.1 million in EU funding for Atmos. The companies aim to commercialize low Earth orbit (LEO) manufacturing and logistics capabilities as European alternatives to NASA's commercial LEO destinations and U.S. microgravity platforms.

China's Stranded Astronauts 'In Good Condition' After Space Debris Delays Planned Return (*AP News*)

China's Shenzhou-20 crew remains safe aboard the Tiangong space station after their November 5 return was delayed due to suspected space debris damage to their spacecraft. The China Manned Space Engineering Office reported on November 11 that the three astronauts—Chen Dong, Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie—are in good health and continuing normal operations. The agency did not announce a new return date but is conducting tests and drills in the meantime. The Shenzhou-21 replacement crew successfully docked with the station on November 1, carrying mice for experiments. China continues to pursue ambitious space goals, including a lunar landing by 2030.

U.K. and Germany Have Accused Russia of Threatening Their Satellites (*CNN World*)

Germany and the United Kingdom have issued stark warnings about the increasing threat of Russian and Chinese satellite activity, citing a growing pattern of space-based interference including stalking, jamming and signal collection targeting western assets. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius revealed that Russian reconnaissance satellites have shadowed IntelSat satellites used by the German military, while U.K. officials reported weekly jamming of their satellites and stalking by Russian spacecraft with surveillance payloads. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders have expressed concern over Russia's potential development of space-based nuclear weapons, despite Moscow's denials. Analysts note these activities are part of a long-standing pattern of hostile space behavior by Russia and China, both of which have demonstrated kinetic and electromagnetic warfare capabilities in orbit. European nations have responded by pledging billions in new funding for space defense initiatives, though experts warn these measures may not be enough to match the scale or speed of Chinese advancements. NATO's declaration of space as an operational domain and the application of Article 5 to space attacks underscore the alliance's growing urgency to respond to these threats.

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 20, 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

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

Space Law Conference

UNOOSA

November 19-20, 2025

International Conference on Energy from Space

Space Energy Insights

November 19-21, 2025

Delivering Space Capabilities for Warfighting Advantage

CSIS/Hudson Institute

November 20, 2025

Keeping China Grounded: Ensuring Long-Term U.S. Tech Leadership in Low Earth Orbit

CSIS

December 2, 2025

Cislunar Security Conference (CLSC)

JHUAPL

December 2-4, 2025

ASGSR Annual Meeting

ASGSR

December 3-6, 2025

WIA International Security Space Partners Event

WIA

December 8, 2025

2025 Spacepower Conference

The Space Force Association

December 10-12, 2025

Space Deterrence Forum (classified)

NSSA

December 16, 2025

Learn more about our Space Law and Policy practice.

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If you have any questions, please contact:

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