



## Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

---

Good Afternoon!

*The past couple of weeks felt a little like U.S. space policy stepped back to 1969. Sen. Ted Cruz channeled John Fogerty to warn about the space race with China and appeared to lean into U.S. government-owned rockets leading the return to the moon. Meanwhile, Huntsville, AL dusted off its “Rocket Town, USA” moniker as the headquarters for both the Golden Dome project and USSPACECOM are headed to the city.*

*In global news, China announced plans to make Guangdong a hub for commercial space innovation, Sweden’s Esrange Space Center has emerged as a cornerstone of European launch capabilities, and India declared its intent to make space central to its national security strategy.*

*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

[There’s a Bad Moon on the Rise: Why Congress and NASA Must Thwart China in the Space Race](#) (U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation)

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) announced a full committee hearing which took place September 3, 2025, titled “There’s a Bad Moon on the Rise: Why Congress and NASA Must Thwart China in the Space Race.” The hearing examined legislative priorities for the

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) upcoming reauthorization and assessed how U.S. policy and investments can ensure continued American leadership in space amid accelerating competition from China. Topics included U.S. presence in low Earth orbit, lunar operations and deep space missions, with testimony from leaders in the commercial space industry and former NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine.

### **Ted Cruz Reminds Us Why NASA's Rocket Is Called the 'Senate Launch System'** (*Ars Technica*)

In a sharp turn from his past support for commercial space, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) has emerged as a staunch defender of NASA's costly Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, dubbed the "Senate Launch System" due to longstanding congressional efforts to protect the program and its contractors like Boeing. Despite previously championing private-sector growth in space, Cruz recently secured \$6.7 billion in additional SLS and Gateway funding in the fiscal year (FY) 26 omnibus bill, contradicting the Trump administration's proposal to wind down SLS after Artemis III. Ahead of his September 3 hearing on the China-U.S. space race, Cruz removed the Commercial Space Federation's president from the witness list, raising concerns that the hearing will sideline the critical role of reusable commercial vehicles like SpaceX's Starship and Blue Origin's Mark II lunar lander. Critics argue that prioritizing the slow and expensive SLS over faster, cheaper alternatives undermines U.S. efforts to compete with China in lunar exploration.

---

## **Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates**

No new legislation noticed.

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

---

## **Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings**

(August 25, 2025 - September 12, 2025)

On September 3, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (CST) held a [hearing](#) titled "Bad Moon on the Rise: Why Congress and NASA Must Thwart China in the Space Race."

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

## **In the White House/Executive Branch**

## Articles and Quotes

### Trump Says Space Command HQ Will Move to Alabama (*Air & Space Forces*)

President Trump announced that U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) will relocate its permanent headquarters from Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. Framing the move as a strategic win for national defense and economic development, President Trump highlighted Huntsville's existing space and defense infrastructure including NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command as key factors in the decision. The relocation follows years of political and procedural back-and-forth between the Trump and Biden administrations and is expected to bring thousands of jobs and substantial investment to Alabama. While Alabama lawmakers celebrated the move as cost-saving and strategically sound, Colorado officials warned it could disrupt fully operational missions and weaken readiness amid rising threats from China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.

### Duffy Confident in Moonshot Despite Deep Cuts Proposed to NASA (*Politico*)

Despite a proposed 25% cut to NASA's budget and the potential loss of nearly one-third of its workforce, Acting Administrator Sean Duffy said he remains confident the agency will meet, and even beat its target to return astronauts to the moon by early 2026. Speaking outside the White House, Duffy said President Trump's directive to "win the next space race" against China remains achievable under the current budget, asserting, "If I didn't have enough money to accomplish that mission, I would be screaming from the rooftops." His remarks follow a Fox News appearance where he predicted Artemis II, the first crewed lunar mission in over 50 years, could launch months ahead of schedule. While questions remain about whether Duffy will still lead NASA when the mission lifts off, his dual role at NASA and the Department of Transportation has kept him in the spotlight, including with a recent announcement to build a nuclear reactor on the moon. The White House is reportedly considering candidates to permanently fill the role.

### Trump's Labor Union EO Designates NASA as Primarily An Intelligence/National Security Agency (*Space Policy Online*)

President Trump issued an Executive Order excluding NASA from federal collective bargaining rights by designating the agency as having intelligence or national security as a "primary function"—a significant departure from its traditional role as a civilian-led space exploration agency. The order impacts more than half of NASA's unionized workforce and has drawn criticism from labor organizations, who view it as retaliation against union members. While the White House cited NASA's contributions to critical national security technologies as justification, experts remain divided over the implications: some warn it may hinder NASA's international scientific cooperation, while others downplay its significance, viewing the move as purely labor-related. The designation represents the first time a president has characterized NASA's core mission in national security terms, raising broader questions about how the agency is perceived both at home and abroad.

### Huntsville's Golden Dome: What We Know Now and What's Coming Next (*Huntsville Business Journal*)

The Golden Dome missile defense program, announced by President Trump in early 2025, is positioning Huntsville, Alabama, as a centerpiece of U.S. next-generation missile defense. This

multi-layered system combining space-based sensors, interceptors and ground assets targets emerging threats like hypersonic and advanced cruise missiles. With an initial \$25 billion appropriation and long-term costs projected between \$175-500 billion, the program is already spurring major industry activity in anticipation of future contracting. If fully realized, Golden Dome could create 4,000-5,000 new jobs, deepen Huntsville's role in national defense and drive demand for aerospace, cyber and engineering talent. The program also reflects broader strategic shifts, as China's rapid advances in space-denial and hypersonic technologies influence U.S. priorities. Local universities and suppliers are aligning with the surge, as Huntsville braces for what could become its largest defense-driven growth cycle since the Cold War.

## Federal Agency Space News

### National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[Tech From NASA's Hurricane-hunting TROPICS Flies on Commercial Satellites](#) (September 2, 2025)

[NASA-ISRO Mission Aces Checkouts, on Track to Start Delivering Science](#) (August 28, 2025)

[NASA Seeks Volunteers to Track Artemis II Mission](#) (August 27, 2025)

### U.S. Department of Defense

[Trump Announces Relocation of U.S. Space Command](#) (September 2, 2025)

[Spacecom Commander Emphasizes Need for Expanded Partnerships, Investment](#) (August 26, 2025)

### U.S. Space Force

[Schriever Wargame 2025 Strengthens International Partnerships, Shapes Future Space Operations](#) (August 26, 2025)

[Whiting at SOUTHDEC 25: Invest in Space, Secure the Future](#) (August 22, 2025)

[U.S. Space Force Launches Eighth X-37B Mission](#) (August 22, 2025)

## International

### Articles & Quotes

### **China's Guangdong Province Lays Out Ambitious Commercial Space Objectives** *(SpaceNews)*

China's Guangdong province recently released new measures to accelerate the development of its commercial space ecosystem through 2028, building on a broader 2024-2028 action plan. The policy outlines seven domains with 21 targeted actions to foster integration across satellite constellations, ground stations, innovation and first-application pilots in areas such as space mining and tourism. Guangdong aims to create a supportive regulatory and financial environment to attract private investment and establish itself as a national hub for commercial space innovation, mirroring efforts already underway in Shanghai and Beijing. While the plan lacks explicit production goals, it offers clear implementation tools, including up to 50% co-funding for nationally selected projects and streamlined approvals. The province is already home to firms like CAS Space and Geespace and is developing the Yangjiang Space Launch Center, positioning itself to benefit from China's forthcoming 2026-2035 civil space infrastructure plan.

### **A Base Deep in the Swedish Forest Is Part of Europe's Hope to Compete in Space Race** *(ABC News)*

Amid growing geopolitical uncertainty and calls for European strategic autonomy, Sweden's Esrange Space Center is emerging as a cornerstone of the continent's efforts to establish its own orbital launch capabilities. Nestled deep in the Arctic forest near Kiruna, Esrange offers a vast, uninhabited rocket landing zone and polar-orbit satellite connectivity, making it a natural fit for suborbital tests, Martian parachute trials and future rocket launches. With recent encouragement from U.S. officials like Vice President JD Vance to reduce reliance on American defense systems, and amid concerns over private control of critical satellite infrastructure, European leaders are prioritizing sovereign launch capacity. While the continent's only current orbital site lies in French Guiana, new investments in Esrange and Norway's Andøya Spaceport, alongside commercial players like Germany's Isar Aerospace, mark a strategic shift. These efforts aim to ensure that Europe can access, defend and benefit from space on its own terms, with Sweden's far-north facility now central to both national security and the commercial space economy.

### **India Sees Space as the Future of Security** *(The Times of India)*

India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh declared that space is now central to the nation's long-term economic, security and technological ambitions, emphasizing that India cannot afford to fall behind in this strategic domain. At a ceremony honoring the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) astronauts selected for Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, Singh framed India's space program as a "reflection of national aspirations and global vision," noting achievements like Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan as proof of India's ability to compete globally despite limited resources. He highlighted that space-based technologies already support villages and farmers across India and predicted that future advancements, such as space mining and deep space exploration, will redefine human civilization, further cementing space as a cornerstone of India's national 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)

### Commercially Available Space Domain Awareness Sensing, Data and Analysis

Department of Defense

Close Date: September 15, 2025

### Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Facility Commercial Utilization

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: November 28, 2025

## Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

### NASA Launch Services II (NLS-II) 2025 On-Ramp

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: September 18, 2025

### Program and Analysis Control (PAAC VI) Support Services

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: October 1, 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

### Glenn Space Technology Symposium

AAS

September 8-10, 2025

### Outer Space Security Conference

UNIDIR

September 9-10, 2025

### Global Aerospace Summit

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

September 9-11, 2025

**2025 EMER-GEN Conference**

**AMOS & SGAC**

September 14-16, 2025

**NASA EXMAG Meeting**

**NASA**

September 15-17, 2025

**World Space Business Week**

**Novaspace**

September 15-17, 2025

**Space Defense and Security Summit**

**SDSS**

September 16-17, 2025

**2025 AMOS Conference**

**AMOS**

September 16-19, 2025

**Space Logistics Conference**

**SMG**

September 18-19, 2025

**UNL Space Law Conference**

**UNL**

September 18, 2025

**2025 Air, Space, Cyber Convention**

**AFA**

September 22-24, 2025

**2025 International Astronautical Congress**

**IAF**

September 29 - October 3, 2025

**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

Learn more about our Space Law and Policy practice.

[Learn More](#)

## Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact:

## Authors



Thomas McCarthy  
Partner  
Washington, D.C.



Carlos Bermudez  
Partner  
Los Angeles



Jennifer Richter  
Partner  
Washington, D.C.





**Hans Rickhoff**  
Partner  
Washington, D.C.



**Steven Rowings**  
Partner  
Washington, D.C.



**Marta Thompson**  
Senior Counsel  
Washington, D.C.



**Ryan Dowell**  
Counsel  
New York



**Lamar Smith**  
Senior Consultant and  
Former Member of  
Congress  
Washington, D.C.

## Contributors



**Chase Hamilton**  
Associate  
Washington, D.C.



**Sharanya Sriram**  
Associate  
Washington, D.C.

**Kathryn Herman**  
Public Policy Fellow  
Washington, D.C.

© 2025 Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. All rights reserved. Attorney advertising. This document is distributed for informational use only; it does not constitute legal advice and should not be used as such. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. Receipt of this information does not create an attorney-client relationship. Do not act upon this information without seeking professional counsel. All content is presented by Akin and cannot be copied or rebroadcasted without express written consent. Akin is the practicing name of Akin Gump LLP, a New York limited liability partnership authorized and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority under number 267321. A list of the partners is available for inspection at Eighth Floor, Ten Bishops Square, London E1 6EG. For more information about Akin Gump LLP, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP and other associated entities under which the Akin network operates worldwide, please see our [Legal Notices](#) page.

[Update Your Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Legal Notices](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

This email was sent by: 2001 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006-1037