Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

If space policy had a theme for this edition, it might be "build more—but build it better." In Washington, lawmakers are advancing a $55.5 billion Space Force budget while reintroducing greater cost transparency through renewed acquisition reforms, and a new executive order pushes NASA to develop a plan for quantum space applications. On the ground, NASA's Inspector General warns that aging launch infrastructure may struggle to keep pace with demand, even as the agency moves forward with missions like DAPHNE. In Europe, the emphasis is less on budgets and more on independence, calling to strengthen its own space autonomy away from the U.S.

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

On The Hill

Articles and Quotes

House Appropriations Committee Approves $55.5 Billion for US Space Force (*SpaceNews*)
The House Appropriations Committee's fiscal year (FY) 2027 Defense Appropriations bill appropriates approximately $55.5 billion for the U.S. Space Force, including $35.3 billion for research and development, $9.6 billion for procurement, $8.8 billion for operations and maintenance, and $1.78 billion for military personnel. The accompanying **committee report** supports continued investment in space launch, missile warning, satellite communications and global positioning systems (GPS) while endorsing the Space Force's acquisition reforms. At the same time, lawmakers expressed concern over cost growth and schedule delays in major acquisition programs, criticized the lack of funding for dynamic space operations and the Tranche 3 Transport Layer of the Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture, and urged greater competition in future satellite communications procurements. The committee also directed the Department of War (DoW) to reduce unnecessary classification of Space Force capabilities and stated that the proposed Golden Dome missile defense architecture should be funded through the regular appropriations process, rather than budget reconciliation, to ensure sustained congressional oversight. Find the House Appropriations Committee press release **here**.

Senate Lawmakers Bring Back Acquisition Reforms Dropped from Final 2026 NDAA (*Federal News Network*)
The Senate Armed Services Committee's FY 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) revives several acquisition reform proposals that were removed from the final FY 2026 defense policy bill while expanding congressional oversight of Pentagon procurement practices. The legislation would require contractors on certain noncompetitive cost-plus contracts to notify DoW of significant price increases and would prohibit contractors from submitting updated cost or pricing data after a contract price has been agreed upon. The bill also revisits efforts to expand government rights to technical data and software to support maintenance and repair activities. Building on reforms enacted in the FY 2026 NDAA, Senate lawmakers are seeking greater transparency around software acquisition, commercial purchasing, and other transaction agreements, while directing the Pentagon to provide additional reporting on implementation of acquisition reforms. The legislation also includes workforce initiatives that would establish performance metrics for portfolio acquisition executives, create a centralized acquisition management dashboard, bring commercial acquisition experts into advisory roles and develop advanced financial training programs for the acquisition workforce.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Sen. Ted Budd (R-NC) **introduced** the Semiconductor Superiority Act (**S. 4750**), which would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the application of the advanced manufacturing investment credit with respect to semiconductor manufacturing facilities located in outer space.

Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) introduced the Artemis II Congressional Gold Medal Act (**S. 4909**), which would award a Congressional Gold Medal to the crew members of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Artemis II mission.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) **introduced** the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2027 (**S. 4784**), which would authorize appropriations for FY 2027 for military activities of DoW, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy (DOE) and prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year.

Rep. April McClain Delaney (D-MD) introduced the Broadband Deployment and Economic Impact Study Act of 2026 (**H.R. 9286**), which would direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to conduct a study and submit to Congress a report on the technologies used to provide broadband internet access service.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(June 15, 2026 - July 2, 2026)

On June 16, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) held a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters.

On June 16, the Senate Armed Services (SASC) Subcommittee on Airland held a **hearing** to examine Army force modernization in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2027 and the Future Years Defense Program.

On June 23, the SASC Subcommittee on Airland held a **hearing** to examine the F-35 aircraft program.

On June 23, SSCI held a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters.

On June 24, SSCI held a closed **briefing** on intelligence matters.

On June 24, the House Appropriations Committee held a **markup** of the FY 2027 Defense Bill.

On June 24, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) held a closed **hearing** to examine the effectiveness of the intelligence community's Inspector General.

On June 25, the HPSCI Subcommittee on the National Intelligence Enterprise held a **roundtable** to examine the U.S. ability to respond to emerging gray zone threats amid a contested homeland.

On June 25, SASC held a **hearing** to consider nominations.

On June 25, the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology (SST) held a **markup** of 10 bills.

On July 1, House SST will hold a **hearing** on advancing America's space weather capabilities.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

Trump Executive Order Directs NASA To Plan Quantum Space Applications (*SpaceNews*)
On June 22, President Trump signed an **executive order** directing NASA to develop a five-year plan for civilian quantum sensing and networking space applications within 120 days as part of a broader federal effort to accelerate U.S. quantum technology development. The order also directs DoW to identify priority quantum sensor projects for fielding by 2028 and establishes a new initiative to develop a quantum computer for scientific research. The announcement coincided with the launch of America's Quantum Space Initiative, an industry coalition focused on advancing quantum technologies for space applications. The effort builds on ongoing work in quantum sensing, communications and navigation, including technologies designed to improve space-based positioning, timing, secure communications and space situational awareness. NASA and industry partners have already collaborated on quantum research aboard the International Space Station, and the administration's new directive seeks to accelerate the transition of these technologies from research programs to operational capabilities.

NASA IG Cites Dire NASA Launch Infrastructure Needs (*Space Policy Online*)
NASA's Office of Inspector General released a report warning that aging launch infrastructure at both Kennedy Space Center and Wallops Flight Facility is struggling to support rapidly growing launch demand. The report notes that many launch pads, utility systems, roads and bridges date back to the 1960s or earlier and require significant modernization. While Congress provided $250 million for launch infrastructure improvements in last year's reconciliation package, NASA estimates Kennedy Space Center alone needs at least $1 billion in additional investments. The report recommends that Congress grant NASA authority, similar to DoW, to accept financial contributions from commercial partners for capital infrastructure projects. It also encourages NASA to expand the use of Enhanced Use Lease agreements to better recover infrastructure costs. The Inspector General concluded that substantial infrastructure investment will be necessary to support future commercial launches as well as NASA's planned lunar and Mars exploration missions.

NASA Selects Mission to Study Space Weather Interaction with Earth's Atmosphere (*SpaceNews*)
NASA selected the Dynamic Atmosphere-Ionosphere Explorer (DAPHNE) mission to move into development, with launch planned no earlier than 2029. The mission will use two identical satellites equipped with three instruments to study how Earth's upper atmosphere interacts with space weather by measuring atmospheric composition, temperature and winds in the thermosphere. NASA said DAPHNE will address longstanding questions about how Earth's lower atmosphere influences the upper atmosphere and space weather, while also supporting future human exploration by improving understanding of space weather impacts on astronauts, spacecraft and critical systems. The mission is part of NASA's Dynamical Neutral Atmosphere-Ionosphere Coupling (DYNAMIC) program, which has a cost cap of $250 million excluding launch, with a formal cost estimate expected in 2027. NASA also said DAPHNE aligns with the agency's revised heliophysics strategy, which places greater emphasis on research that produces practical applications for space operations, infrastructure and human exploration.

New Report Looks at US Options for Potential Escalating Conflict in Space (*Air & Space Forces Magazine*)
A new report from the Mitchell Institute's Spacepower Advantage Center of Excellence examined how the United States might respond to an escalating conflict in space and concluded that growing threats, particularly from China, underscore the need for continued investment in Space Force capabilities. The report is based on a January workshop involving 50 experts from government, industry, academia and the military who evaluated a series of escalating conflict scenarios ranging from gray-zone interference with satellites to a nuclear detonation in low Earth orbit. Key findings emphasized the complexity of space conflict, the risks posed by increasing hostile activity below the threshold of war, the importance of accurate attribution through enhanced space domain awareness, the role of strategic communications and the need for a range of credible military response options. The report recommends accelerating decision-making, strengthening partnerships, improving resilience of space systems, protecting critical infrastructure, expanding response capabilities and increasing high-end training and exercises focused on space conflict scenarios.

DARPA Exploring Tech for Tactically Responsive Space Operations (*Defense Scoop*)
The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is seeking industry input on technologies and operational concepts that could enable the rapid restoration of space capabilities if satellites are damaged or destroyed in orbit. Through a new effort called Rapid Reconstitution of Space Capabilities, the agency aims to build on the Space Force's Tactically Responsive Space initiatives by developing mechanisms to restore critical space services on timelines ranging from hours to weeks following attacks, accidents or orbital debris collisions. The effort is focused on improving the military's ability to rapidly deploy replacement capabilities and increase the resilience of space architectures. DARPA is soliciting ideas across several areas, including spacecraft, payloads, launch vehicles, launch integration and operational concepts, with topics of interest ranging from spacecraft scalability and very low Earth orbit operations to alternative positioning, navigation and timing capabilities. Responses from industry are due July 8.

Federal Agency Space News

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA Names Sean Gallagher as Chief Information Officer (June 23, 2026)

ARMD Research Solicitations (June 23, 2026)

NASA's Next Generation Telescope Arrives in Florida Ahead of Launch (June 21, 2026)

NASA Testing Advanced Capabilities for Moon, Mars Rovers (June 18, 2026)

NASA Announces Public-Private Partnership to Advance Mars Science (June 17, 2026)

Government Accountability Office

The Next Outpost: NASA's Plans for Replacing the Aging International Space Station (June 23, 2026)

Office of Space Commerce

SSA Coordination in Focus at 69th Session of UN COPUOS (June 22, 2026)

U.S. Space Force

'A Collaborative Engine': S4 Summit Unites Airmen, Guardians for Space Superiority (June 12, 2026)

U.S Department of Defense

The Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering Finalizes Lab Review, Aims to Modernize R&D Enterprise (June 24, 2026)

DoW Unleashes Quantum Defense Strategy to Harden Networks and Empower the Joint Force (June 23, 2026)

International

Articles & Quotes

ESA Chief Calls for Greater European Space Autonomy as Trust in US Partnership Erodes (*Space.com*)
European Space Agency (ESA) Director General Josef Aschbacher called for Europe to strengthen its space autonomy following recent U.S. decisions to pause the Gateway lunar station and cancel the Mars Sample Return campaign, both of which involved significant European contributions. Aschbacher argued that these actions demonstrated Europe's vulnerability to decisions made by external partners and emphasized the need for stronger independent capabilities alongside continued international cooperation. He highlighted human spaceflight as a strategic priority and urged Europe to develop the ability to act independently when necessary while maintaining partnerships with countries such as Japan, South Korea and Australia. European space policy experts noted that recent geopolitical developments have intensified longstanding debates over European space autonomy, with growing recognition that Europe possesses substantial technical capabilities but has often lacked the political independence to determine how and with whom

those capabilities are employed.

Germany Tells Trump: Without Us, Space Exploration 'Cannot Be Done' (*Politico*)
German Space Minister Dorothee Bär emphasized that U.S. space exploration efforts remain dependent on key European technologies, highlighting Europe's role in supplying critical components for NASA missions. She pointed specifically to the European Service Module built under the ESA program, which provides power, propulsion, air, water and thermal control for NASA's Orion spacecraft, as well as German-built star trackers used for spacecraft navigation. Bär argued that the transatlantic space relationship involves mutual dependencies and stressed the importance of maintaining cooperation amid growing competition from China, Russia, North Korea and Iran. She also criticized proposed European space regulations, warning that additional regulatory requirements could hinder the competitiveness of European space companies, and said Germany is pursuing a national space law intended to accelerate the development and deployment of new space technologies.

Chinese Spaceplane Releases Object into Orbit, According to Commercial Space Surveillance (*SpaceNews*)
Commercial space tracking firm LeoLabs reported that China's reusable Shenlong spaceplane released an unidentified object into orbit on June 22 during its fourth mission. The object was first detected near the spaceplane by radar in New Zealand and was subsequently tracked across LeoLabs' global network, leading the company to assess with high confidence that it originated from the spacecraft. The release follows a pattern observed during previous Shenlong missions, in which the spaceplane deployed subsatellites that later conducted rendezvous and proximity operations. China has disclosed few details about the program beyond describing it as a reusable spacecraft technology demonstration effort. The Shenlong spaceplane launched in February 2026 and is operating in low Earth orbit, while analysts assess it may be comparable in size and function to the U.S. military's X-37B spaceplane. The mission is part of China's broader effort to advance reusable space transportation technologies and next-generation launch systems.

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)

Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB) RFI for Space Launch Complex-9 (SLC-9) Out Grant
Department of Defense
Close Date: July 8, 2026

Rapid Reconstitution of Space Capabilities
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
Close Date: July 8, 2026

Protected Anti-Jam Tactical SATCOM Enterprise Mission Management (PATSEMM) Sources Sought
Department of Defense
Close Date: July 13, 2026

Strategic Partnerships for NASA Data Center Infrastructure
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: July 17, 2026

Combatant Commanders Integrated Command and Control System (CCIC2S) Service Life Extension Program (SLEP)
Department of Defense
Close Date: July 20, 2026

NASA To Research, Evaluate, Assess, and Treat (TREAT) Astronauts Act
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: August 10, 2026

Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Facility Commercial Utilization
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: September 30, 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)

AI Data Center Development at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, and Clear Space Force Station
Department of Defense
Close Date: June 29, 2026

Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) 2.0
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: June 30, 2026

Network Extension for User Continuity and Sustainability (NEXUS) Backward-Compatible Ka-Band Relay Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: July 7, 2026

Foundation GEOINT (FG) Change Detection (CD) Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO)
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
Close Date: July 14, 2026

Commercial SmallSat Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) On-Ramp 2
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: September 5, 2026

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

6th Annual EU Space Forum
EU Space Forum
June 30 - July 1, 2026

Space Renaissance International IV World Congress
Space Renaissance International
June 30 - July 4, 2026

27th International Space Planes and Hypersonics Systems and Technology Conference
AIAA
July 7-10, 2026

Deep Space Advanced Radar (DARC) Interim Contractor Support (ICS) Industry Day
USSF / SSC / SYD 85
July 20-22, 2026

Space Investors Forum
NSSA
July 21, 2026

Securing Space and Protecting Our World: Cyber Security Across Space and Terrestrial Systems
GW Space Policy Institute
The Aerospace Corporation
July 21, 2026

Humans to the Moon and Mars (H2M2) Summit
Explore Mars
July 21-23, 2026

2026 NASA Exploration Science Forum
NASA
July 21-23, 2026

COPSAR 2026
Committee on Space Research
August 1-9, 2026

2026 Taiwan Lunar Symposium
Taiwan Space Union
August 9-13, 2026

2026 Southern Space Conference
SIAA
August 11-12, 2026

4th Texas Area Planetary Science Meeting
TAPS
August 20-21, 2026

40th Small Satellite Conference
Small Sat
August 23-26, 2026

3rd IAA Conference on AI for Space
IAA
August 26, 2026

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If you have any questions, please contact:

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