

Akin™

Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update



January 10, 2025

[Subscribe](#) | [Share](#)   

Good Afternoon!

It was quite the holiday season for space: the FCC rounded out the year with a great gift, allocating additional spectrum for commercial launch and reentry vessels, and the Parker Solar Probe's record-breaking solar flyby kept it toastier than a new pair of slippers. But the holidays are over, and the new Congress has gotten down to business, electing a new speaker shuffling the leadership of several space and space-adjacent committees.

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

Akin Spotlight

Introducing Akin's [Policy Pulse](#), a comprehensive hub and bi-weekly newsletter, thoughtfully crafted by members of our bipartisan lobbying & public policy, regulatory and litigation practices to serve as your go-to resource for essential insights, in-depth analyses and practical political tools following the 2024 U.S. Elections.

[Subscribe here](#) to receive bi-weekly *Policy Pulse* updates on the potential agenda for the 119th Congress and the incoming administration.

On The Hill

Articles and Quotes

How Space Legislation Fared in the 118th Congress and a Look Ahead ([Space Policy Online](#))

The 118th Congress struggled to pass major space legislation, with key measures like NASA's authorization bill and a commercial space regulation bill remaining unresolved going into the 119th. The only significant legislative accomplishments included two National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) and the Launch Communications Act, which addressed spectrum access for commercial launches. Congressional gridlock and internal party conflicts hindered broader progress, leaving space policy leaders to tackle initiatives in the 119th Congress.

Senate NASA Bill Focuses on Commercial Space Stations, Science Mission

Overruns (SpaceNews)

At the end of the 118th Congress, Senate Commerce Committee leaders Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) introduced the *NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2024 (S. 5600)*, which would have directed the agency to accelerate work on commercial space stations, orchestrate a transition away from the International Space Station that maintains “a continuous human presence,” and push forward the Commercial LEO Destinations (CLD) program. It also aimed to address cost overruns for various science programs, a recurring issue for the agency. While the bill is now considered dead, its language likely signals Congress’ legislative priorities for NASA moving into the 119th Congress.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

On Friday, January 3, Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) won reelection as House Speaker for the 119th Congress, securing 218 out of 219 Republican votes.

The new Congress has brought several changes to committee leadership pertinent to space policy. Relevant House and Senate committee leadership for the 119th is as follows:

Committee (House/Senate)	Chair	Ranking Member
Science, Space, Technology (H)	Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX)	Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)
Commerce, Science, Transportation (S)	Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX)	Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
Appropriations (H)	Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK)	Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)
Appropriations (S)	Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)	Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)
Armed Services (H)	Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL)	Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA)
Armed Services (S)	Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS)	Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI)
Transportation and Infrastructure (H)	Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO)	Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA)

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(Jan 10 - Jan 24, 2025)

The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a **confirmation hearing** on Tuesday, January 14 at 9:30 a.m. to evaluate the nomination of Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold a **confirmation hearing** on Wednesday, January 15 at 10:00 AM to evaluate the nomination of Marco Rubio for Secretary of State.



Articles and Quotes

FCC Allocates Additional Spectrum for Commercial Launches (SpaceNews)

The FCC has allocated additional spectrum, between 2360-2395 MHz, for communications to and from commercial launch and reentry vehicles. This decision, meant to address recent growth in launch activities, fulfills provisions of the Launch Communications Act and simplifies licensing under a new framework intended to accelerate the license application process. While several aerospace groups have raised interference concerns, the FCC asserts that the band's secondary basis use case will require launch operators to specifically avoid interference with aerospace testing.

NASA Proposes Cheaper, Quicker Way to Get Mars Rocks and Soil to Earth (Associated Press)

NASA has announced that it is considering two options for the return of Martian samples collected by the Perseverance rover, a decision that will be presented to the upcoming Trump Administration. The options, costing between \$6-7 billion, aim to reduce costs from the original \$11 billion retrieval plan. While full details and engineering data are yet to be released, the two options present either the use of a sky crane landing system or a landing system developed by private actors as economic options.

Biden Signs the FY2025 NDAA (Space Policy Online)

On December 23, President Biden signed the FY2025 NDAA, authorizing \$883.7 billion for defense, including \$29.4 billion for the Space Force. The act extends key commercial spaceflight regulations to 2028, establishes a Commercial Augmentation Space Reserve, and mandates updates on commercial space strategies. It also includes funding adjustments for Space Force programs.

Experts: US Not Organized or Equipped for the Coming Electromagnetic Wars in Space (Air and Space Forces)

Some industry and policy experts have warned that the U.S. is insufficiently prepared for electromagnetic warfare (EW) in space, citing coordination challenges and policy gaps within the Department of Defense (DoD). With low barriers to entry, EW threats like jamming and spoofing from even non-spacefaring nations or groups could pose significant risks to US assets. The same experts argue that improving cross-agency communication, aligning roles in acquisitions, and bolstering spectrum policy innovation should be key DoD priorities.

Parker Solar Probe Makes History as Scientists Urge Future Investments in Heliophysics Research (Space Policy Online)

On December 24, NASA's Parker Solar Probe achieved a historic milestone, coming within 3.8 million miles of the Sun's surface - closer than any previous spacecraft. The success coincides with the release of the National Academies heliophysics Decadal Survey, which advocates for increased investment in solar and space physics, especially the Geospace Dynamics Constellation (GDC) program. While GDC was left out of NASA's FY2025 budget request, Senate appropriators have pledged \$15 million to the program if they receive a requested report on its launch from FY2024.

Defense Department

[Biden Administration Announces Additional Security Assistance for Ukraine](#) (December 30, 2024)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[NASA to Explore Two Landing Options for Returning Samples from Mars](#) (January 7, 2025)

[NASA to Cover Two Spacewalks, Hold Preview News Conference](#) (January 7, 2025)

[NASA Names Adam Schlesinger as Commercial Lunar Payload Services Project Manager](#) (January 6, 2025)

[Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) and Small Business Technology Transfer \(STTR\)](#) (January 6, 2025)

[NASA, NOAA to Announce 2024 Global Temperatures, Climate Conditions](#) (January 3, 2025)

[Assessment of PFO as Related to DCS in the Spaceflight Environment and During Ground Testing](#) (December 31, 2024)

[NASA Administrator Pays Tribute to President Carter](#) (December 29, 2024)

[NASA Welcomes Liechtenstein as Newest Artemis Accords Signatory](#) (December 20, 2024)

[New Report Analyzes Long History of NASA Support for Commercial Space](#) (December 19, 2024)

U.S. Space Force

[Space Launch Delta 45 Breaks Records, Remains World's Busiest Spaceport in 2024](#) (January 2, 2025)

[S4S Establishes Strategic Vision After First Year of Successes](#) (December 30, 2024)

International

Articles & Quotes

[China's Space Agency Faces Leadership Change Amid Shake-Up](#) (*SpaceNews*)

China's space agency is undergoing a leadership transition, with Zhang Kejian stepping down as head of the China National Space Administration (CNSA). Shan Zhongde, the former president of Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, previously sanctioned under the first Trump Administration, is expected to succeed him. This change occurs as China advances its crewed lunar program and continues to seek international partnerships for its International Lunar Research Station (ILRS). During Zhang's tenure, CNSA greatly expanded its capabilities, conducting both Mars and lunar missions and leading the inception of the ILRS.

[Europe Must 'Wake Up' to Win Arms Race, Warns NATO Commander](#) (*Politico*)

NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, Admiral Pierre Vandier, has urged Europe to reform its arms procurement processes, citing slow production, over-regulation and risk aversion. Vandier emphasized the importance of faster development and flexibility to compete in the global arms race, referencing space, IT and logistics as critical areas. He praised the U.S. approach to innovation and risk-taking, encouraging Europe to follow suit. Vandier also highlighted the strategic need for a robust European defense industry to complement U.S. efforts amid growing challenges from Asia.

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)

Aerocapture Technology Demonstration Mission

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Jan 15, 2025

Near Earth Orbit Network Series-1 Project Flight Elements

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Feb 12, 2025

Certain Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 9 Requirements

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Defense Department

Close Date: Feb 18, 2025

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Safety and Mission Assurance Services (SMAS) II

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Jan 13, 2025

Facilities and Operations Maintenance Support Services II (FOMSS II)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Jan 21, 2025

Human Health and Performance Contract 2 (HHPC2)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Jan 30, 2025

ROSES 2024: E.9 Space Biology: Research Studies

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Feb 4, 2025

Commercial SmallSat Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) On-Ramp 1

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Feb 5, 2025

ROSES 2024: A.52 Advanced Component Technology

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Apr 10, 2025

NASA Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I Fiscal Year 2025

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Mar 10, 2025

NASA Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Phase I Fiscal Year 2025 Solicitation

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Mar 10, 2025

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

Federal Acquisition Regulation: Strengthening America's Cybersecurity Workforce

Department of Defense, National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Mar 4, 2025

Upcoming Space Events

AAS Winter Meeting

American Astronomical Society

January 12-16, 2025

AMS Annual Meeting

American Meteorological Society

January 12-16, 2025

Safeguarding Radio Frequency Spectrum for a Sustainable Future

European Space Policy Institute

January 15, 2025

Innovate Space: Finance Forum

Space Foundation

January 22-23, 2025

Integrating Commercial Innovation Into National Space Missions

AIAA

January 23, 2025

Celestial Navigation: Space Essentials for New Actors

Meridian and SWF

January 24, 2025

Commercial Space Week

SpaceCom

January 27-30, 2025

17th European Space Conference

Business Bridge Europe

January 28-29, 2025

Interagency Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee

NSF, NASA, DOE

January 30-31, 2025

SmallSat Symposium 2025

SatNews

February 4-6, 2025

Defense and Intelligence Space Conference

National Security Space Association

February 10-12, 2025

The Legal and Operational Challenges of Human Space Flight

Cleveland State Law

February 13, 2025

Business of Space Conference

University of Alabama Huntsville

February 23-25, 2025

Global Space Technology Convention and Exhibition

Singapore Space and Technology Ltd

February 26-27, 2025

Farnborough International Space Show

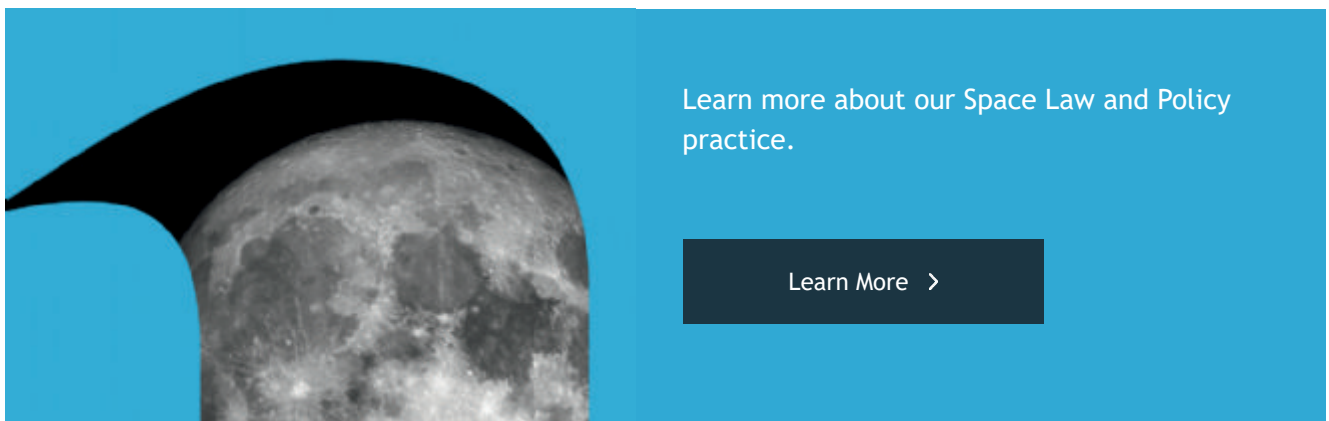
Farnborough International

March 19-20, 2025

SBLL 2024

Space Beach Law Lab

March 25-27, 2025



Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact:

Authors



Michael C. Mineiro
Space Policy & Regulation
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4068



Thomas J. McCarthy
International Trade
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4047



Carlos M. Bermudez
Corporate
[Email](#)
+1 310.728.3320



Jennifer L. Richter
Telecom, Media & Technology
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4524



Hans C. Rickhoff
Lobbying & Public Policy
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4145



Steve A. Rowings
Telecom, Media & Technology
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4412



Marta A. Thompson
Government Contracts
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4055



Lamar Smith
Lobbying & Public Policy
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4031

Contributors



Chase Hamilton
International Trade
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4018

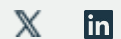


Sharanya Sriram
Telecom, Media & Technology
[Email](#)
+1 202.887.4278



Brandon Brodwater
Lobbying & Public Policy
[Email](#)
+1 202.416.5127

akingump.com



© 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](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Forward to a Friend](#) | [Legal Notices](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

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