

Akin™

Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update



February 21, 2025

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Good Afternoon!

Though space policy hasn't dominated recent headlines, plenty has happened over the past two weeks: The House Science committee outlined its space priorities and requested GAO review of FAA launch rules, Japan's PM reaffirmed Artemis cooperation, U.S. and India agreed to boost space ties, and NASA will use the Webb Telescope to collect data on asteroid YR4.

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

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

Congress Seeks NASA Authorization, Commercial Space Bills (SpaceNews)

In the 119th Congress, congressional leaders are setting up for a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) authorization bill and commercial space legislation. In speeches given on February 12, Senate Commerce Chair Ted Cruz (R-TX) and House Science Chair Brian Babin (R-TX) both emphasized the importance of managing the transition from the International Space Station to commercial space stations in low Earth orbit (LEO), and further stressed the need for the United States to maintain a continuous human presence in LEO and return to the lunar surface before China. The lawmakers plan to reintroduce bills addressing mission authorization for commercial space activities and other regulatory issues. Given that the House Appropriations Committee Chair has suggested that agencies with

lapsed authorizations could face significant budget cuts, there is new incentive to pass a NASA authorization bill within the year.

Babin’s Top Priorities: Vibrant Commercial Space Sector, Americans Back on the Moon (Space Policy Online)

House Science Chair Brian Babin (R-TX) has identified two key priorities for the committee: maintaining a vibrant commercial space sector and ensuring American astronauts return to the Moon before China. As part of this effort, Chair Babin and Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) are asking the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Part 450 regulations to assess their effectiveness in streamlining commercial space launch licensing. Chair Babin has remarked on prioritizing the reduction of regulatory barriers that may hinder U.S. space innovation, advocating for a legislative framework that facilitates space commerce and maintains American leadership in space activities.

House Science Committee Asks GAO to Review FAA Commercial Launch Licensing Process (SpaceNews)

On February 12, House Science Chair Brian Babin (R-TX) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) sent a letter to the GAO requesting a formal review of the FAA’s Part 450 launch regulations. The request comes in response to increasing industry concerns about the complexity and efficiency of the licensing process for commercial launch and reentry operations. The letter seeks to understand if Part 450 is being implemented effectively and efficiently, especially given the increasing frequency and technological diversity of U.S.-based space operations.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

On February 18, the Senate confirmed Howard Lutnick as Secretary of Commerce by a vote of 51-45.

On February 12, the Senate confirmed Tulsi Gabbard as Director of National Intelligence by a vote of 52-48.

Also on February 12, the Senate Finance Committee advanced the nomination of Jamieson Greer to be United States Trade Representative (USTR) to the full Senate by a vote of 15-12.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings (Feb 7, 2025 - Feb 21, 2025)

On February 25 at 10:15 a.m., the House Natural Resources Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will hold the hearing titled **“Full Blast: Contrasting Momentum in the Space Mining Economy to the Terrestrial Mining Regulatory Morass.”**

In the White House/Executive Branch



Articles and Quotes

DOGE to Examine NASA Payments (SpaceNews)

NASA's Acting Administrator Janet Petro has confirmed that the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) will examine NASA's payments, similar to its ongoing analyses of other agencies and departments. Petro further asserts that the agency is currently prioritizing the implementation of President Trump's various executive orders. The DOGE entrance, along with "hundreds" of NASA employees accepting the administration's buyout offer, brings uncertainty for NASA staffing and programming. In a letter sent to Petro on February 11, Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) urged NASA to prevent DOGE from accessing the agency's facilities and information.

White House Reaffirms U.S.-Japanese Artemis Cooperation (Space Policy Online)

During a February 7 meeting, President Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru reaffirmed their commitment to U.S.-Japanese cooperation on the Artemis program, which includes Japan's development of a pressurized lunar rover and sending two Japanese astronauts to the Moon. This confirmation may alleviate growing concerns of a NASA shift in focus toward Mars instead of lunar exploration. In a joint statement, the leaders emphasized a desire for a "new golden age" in U.S.-Japan relations, focusing on security, defense and economic cooperation within the framework of a free and open Indo-Pacific. While Japan is involved in the Gateway lunar space station project, the joint statement primarily highlighted surface exploration, leaving some ambiguity about future collaboration in lunar orbit.

NASA's 2 Stuck Astronauts May Return to Earth Sooner Under New Plan (Associated Press)

NASA has announced that astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams may return to Earth earlier than expected, with the agency now targeting a mid-March return instead of the initially planned April timeline. This change comes as SpaceX will switch to using an older Crew Dragon capsule for the upcoming Crew-10 mission, which is set to launch on March 12, allowing the new crew to arrive before Wilmore and Williams depart. The two astronauts have been at the International Space Station for over eight months due to delays caused by issues with Boeing's Starliner capsule and subsequent scheduling challenges with SpaceX's new capsule.

Asteroid's Odds of Hitting Earth Go Up as NASA Tasked with Studying It (CBS News)

An asteroid named 2024 YR4, discovered in December 2024, has a small but increasing chance of hitting Earth on December 22, 2032. NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) estimate the probability of impact at 3.1% and 2.8% respectively, making YR4 the biggest extra-terrestrial threat in over two decades. Estimated to be between 40-90 meters wide, could potentially cause severe localized damage if it were to strike a populated area. To better assess the risk, astronomers will utilize the James Webb Space Telescope to study the asteroid's size and characteristics more accurately. After these observations, 2024 YR4 will disappear from view until 2028, during which time scientists will analyze the data to refine their predictions of its trajectory.

Space Force General Wants 'More Aggressive' Acquisition Reforms (Air and Space Forces)

Maj. Gen. Stephen Purdy, Space Force acting head of space acquisition, is continuing and intensifying acquisition reforms aimed at contractor and program accountability. Purdy is maintaining the tenets of his predecessor, Frank Calvelli, which focus on buying smaller satellites, increased use of commercial technology and fixed-price contracting. Since May 2022, 14 major acquisition programs have been restructured or canceled due to performance issues and cost overruns. Purdy has cited aiming to make the accelerated

acquisition timelines of Space Development Agency (SDA) and Resilient GPS programs new norm for military space programs.

Federal Agency Space News

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[NASA Science: Being Responsive to Executive Orders](#) (February 18, 2025)

[2024 Annual Highlights of Results from the International Space Station Science](#) (February 18, 2025)

[2024 State-of-the-Art Small Spacecraft Technology Report is Released](#) (February 14, 2025)

[NASA Invites Media to Artemis II Moon Mission Activities at Kennedy](#) (February 11, 2025)

[Building Blocks for Enhanced Mission Execution](#) (February 11, 2025)

U.S. Space Force

[Space Force Leaders Visit Japan to Strengthen Partnership](#) (February 13, 2025)

[DAF Releases Memorandum DEI and Gender Ideology Awards Guidance](#) (February 11, 2025)

[The Department of the Air Force Releases Memorandum DEI and Gender Ideology Publication Review](#) (February 11, 2025)

[DAF Releases Memorandum Updated Telework Agreements to Comply with Presidential Memorandum, Return to In-Person Work](#) (February 10, 2025)

[DAF Release Memorandum Civilian Positions Identified with DEI Duties](#) (February 10, 2025)

International

Articles & Quotes

[United States and India to Expand Collaboration in Space Innovation](#) (*SpaceNews*)

On February 13, India and the White House released a joint statement outlining an emerging technologies innovation partnership, focusing on the creation of an “innovation bridge” in industries such as space and energy. The framework, titled INDUS Innovation, will encompass continued civil and commercial space cooperation, as well as new efforts in long duration human spaceflight, launch, space manufacturing and space tourism.

[Space Connect: The Rise of LEO Satellite Constellations](#) (*International Telecommunication Union*)

The United Nations (U.N.) International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has released the first episode of its Space Connect series, outlining the fundamental trends, drivers and architectures of LEO satellite constellations. The episode analyzes the rapid rise in LEO

satellite proliferation, as well as the breakdown of participation between government programs and commercial actors.

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)

Commercial Development of Lunar Exploration Ground Sites (LEGS) Communications Ground Systems

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Feb 26, 2025

Upgrade Mechanical Systems at the Component Refurbishment and Chemical Analysis (CRCA)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Feb 26, 2025

Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB) Power Phase I (Tower C), Project Control Number (PCN): 99300

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Feb 27, 2025

HyperSTEP Hot Structure

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Feb 28, 2025

Conference on Lunar, Planetary and Space Sciences

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Mar 10, 2025

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Mission Technical Integration Contract (MTIC)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Mar 4, 2025

Astrobee Free-flying Robotics System Operations and Sustaining Engineering Unfunded Space Act Agreement to Transfer System Responsibility to Commercial Provider

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Mar 21, 2025

Simulation and Advanced Software Services II (SASS II)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Close Date: Aug 12, 2025

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

Business of Space Conference

University of Alabama Huntsville

February 23-25, 2025

NASA's Moon to Mars Roadmap: Charting the Next Year

Center for Strategic and International Studies

February 24, 2025

National Space Policy Secretariat Symposium on Ensuring the Safe and Sustainable Use of Outer Space

Japan Cabinet Office's Space Development Promotion Secretariat

February 25, 2025

Global Space Technology Convention and Exhibition

Singapore Space and Technology Ltd

February 26-27, 2025

AscendXTexas

AIAA

February 26-27, 2025

IEEE Aerospace Conference

IEEE, AIAA

March 1-8, 2025

AFA Warfare Symposium

Air and Space Forces Association

March 3-5, 2025

Space Traffic Management Conference

International Academy of Astronautics

March 4-5, 2025

Advisory Committee on Excellence in Space (ACES)

NOAA Office of Space Commerce

March 5, 2025

Leadership Dinner with NRO Director Chris Scolese

Intelligence and National Security Alliance

March 5, 2025

Lunar and Planetary Science Conference

Lunar and Planetary Institute

March 10-14, 2025

Farnborough International Space Show

Farnborough International

March 19-20, 2025

Goddard Space Science Symposium

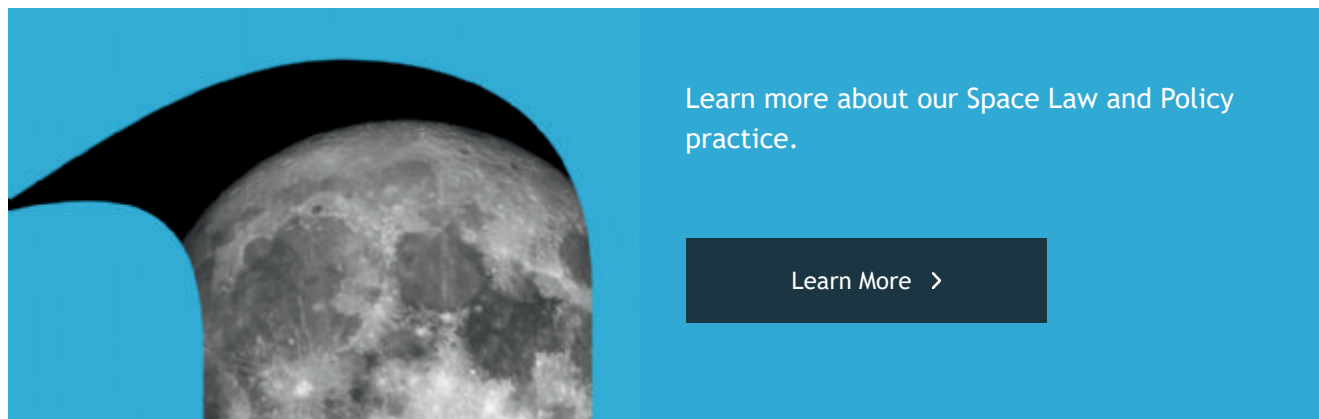
American Astronautical Society

March 19-21, 2025

Space Beach Law Lab

Space Beach Law Lab

March 25-27, 2025



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Questions?

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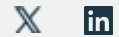


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