

Akin™

Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

March 21, 2025

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Good Afternoon!

There have been plenty of space headlines over the past couple of weeks. Butch and Suni finally got a ride home. The Senate Commerce Committee moved important space bills forward and Space Systems Command expressed interest in commercial alternatives to legacy systems. President Trump indicated Mars is not at the top of his priority list and China opened up its Mars sample return mission to international participation.

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

Senators Introduce 2025 NASA Authorization Bill (Space Policy Online)

Chair Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee (CST) have introduced the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Transition Authorization Act of 2025 ([S. 933](#)). The bill, almost identical to the NASA authorization bill introduced in December, aims to authorize \$25.5 billion for the agency in fiscal year (FY) 2025 while supporting the Artemis program, private sector investments and the commercial space economy, among other provisions. The legislation is further cosponsored by Sens. Jerry Moran (R-KS), Gary Peters (D-MI), Eric Schmitt (R-MO), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL).

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

On March 11, Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO) introduced companion bills of the Space Guard Establishment Act ([S. 963](#); [H.R. 2042](#)) which aim to establish the Space National Guard (SNG) as the reserve component of the Space Force.

On March 12, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee ordered the Situational Awareness of Flying Elements in Orbit (SAFE Orbit) Act ([S. 428](#)) be reported favorably with one amendment.

On March 14, the Senate **confirmed** Stephen Feinberg as Deputy Secretary of Defense by a vote of 59-40.

On March 15, the President signed the full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) ([H.R. 1968](#)) into law, preventing a shutdown and funding the federal government through September.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(Mar 21, 2025 - Apr 4, 2025)

On March 11, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held its Member Day **hearing**.

On March 12, the Senate Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee held a **hearing** on the current readiness of the Joint Force, receiving testimony from Gen. Michael Guetlein, Vice Chief of Space Operations at U.S. Air Force (USAF).

On March 26, the Senate Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee will hold a **hearing** to receive testimony on the U.S. Space Command and U.S. Strategic Command in review of the FY2026 defense authorization request. The House Appropriations National Security, Department of State and Related Programs Subcommittee will hold their Member Day **hearing**.

In the White House/Executive Branch



Articles and Quotes

NASA Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams Return to Earth After 9 Months Stuck in Space (Associated Press)

After a week-long stint on the International Space Station (ISS) turned into a nine-month trip, astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams returned to Earth on March 18. After issues with the Starliner's propulsion system and thrusters in June of 2024, NASA determined that the safest course of action was a return trip on the Dragon capsule, initially scheduled for February. In January, President Trump called for an expedited return of the pair back to Earth.

NASA Gets Extension to Submit Layoff Plans (SpaceNews)

Originally ordered by the Trump administration to present plans for “large-scale” layoffs by March 13, NASA has announced that they have received a one-week extension on reorganization and reduction proposals. The February executive order titled “Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Workforce Optimization” requires all agency heads to submit plans for restructuring and layoffs, excluding any action that impacts military personnel. NASA, which has already begun to lay off staff, cited multiple ongoing projects, such as the Crew-10, SPHEREx and PUNCH launches, as reason for the extension.

Space Force Asks for ‘Flexibility’ to Manage Effects of Yearlong CR (Air and Space Forces)

At a March 12 Senate Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee hearing on Joint Force preparedness, Vice Chief of Space Operation Gen. Michael Guetlein cited concerns and challenges posed by a yearlong CR for the U.S. Space Force (USSF). Guetlein asserted that the being the smallest force, USSF faces the greatest impacts from budget uncertainties. Further, he noted that the branch would fiscally benefit from the authority to engage in multiyear procurements. Guetlein urged Congress to grant USSF flexibility within the now-passed budget framework.

Space Systems Command Reviewing Expensive Legacy Programs for Possible Commercial Shift (Breaking Defense)

Military deputy at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration (ASAF/SQ) Maj. Gen. Stephen Purdy has noted that Space Systems Command (SSC) is currently evaluating several legacy programs and considering commercial alternatives. Purdy asserted that some of these programs are inefficient and expensive, and that SSC hopes to put forward requests for information (RFI) to gain a stronger understanding of the benefits presented by newer commercial options. Purdy has specifically noted the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) as a program under review.

New FCC Space Chief Seeks Licensing Reform And ‘Intensive’ Use of Spectrum (SpaceNews)

Jay Schwartz, the new Chief of the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) Space Bureau, has announced priorities for his tenure at the agency: an expedited licensing process, freeing spectrum for space uses and investment facilitation. Schwartz, at the Satellite 2025 conference, announced that he hopes to bring more automation and shorter timelines to the agency’s licensing processes, and that his main role is to “facilitate and accelerate” investments in the space industry. Schwartz, the former vice president of public policy at Comcast, did not provide timelines for suggested licensing and spectrum reforms.

Trump: Mars Not a Top Priority, But Would Be Great (Space Policy Online)

After citing Martian ambitions in both his inaugural address and his joint address to Congress, President Trump cited in a recent interview that sending humans to Mars is not a top priority for his administration, though he noted that the U.S. remains “leading big in space.”

Federal Agency Space News

Department of Defense

Senate Confirms New Deputy Defense Secretary (March 14, 2025)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

[Welcome Home! NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 Back on Earth After Science Mission](#) (March 18, 2025)

[Dragon Undocks with SpaceX Crew-9 Members for Return to Earth](#) (March 18, 2025)

[Liftoff! NASA's SpaceX Crew-10 Launches from Kennedy Space Center](#) (March 14, 2025)

[NASA Glenn Experts Join Law College to Talk Human Spaceflight](#) (March 12, 2025)

[Human System Risk Board](#) (March 11, 2025)

[NASA Names New EVA and Human Surface Mobility Program Deputy Manager](#) (March 11, 2025)

[Artemis II Upper Stage Delivered to Kennedy](#) (March 10, 2025)

U.S. Space Force

[DAF Announces Restoring America's Fighting Force Task Force Validation Plan](#) (March 17, 2025)

[Space Force, Air Force Leaders Discuss Missile Defense Strategy Amid Growing Global Threats](#) (March 14, 2025)

[Senior Leaders to Senate: Air Force, Space Force Are Ready, Capable, But Challenges Remain](#) (March 12, 2025)

[Air Force, Space Force Discuss Requirements to Win Future Fights](#) (March 10, 2025)

International

Articles & Quotes

[China Opens 2028 Mars Sample Return Mission to International Cooperation](#) (*SpaceNews*)

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) has published an announcement of opportunities for interested parties to submit proposals to join the Tianwen-3 Mars sample return mission. The mission is due to launch in 2028. The announcement notes that proposals are welcome from international partners at both the system and payload level, with 15 kilograms of mass available for international collaboration projects on the Earth return orbiter (ERO) and 5 kilograms on the Mars orbiter (MO). CNSA notes that proposals must align with the mission's scientific objectives or provide additional value.

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)

[Lunar Experiment Support Systems and Handling \(LESSH\) Project Battery](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: April 1, 2025

FCC Launches Inquiry Into Upper C-band

Federal Communications Commission

Close Date: April 29, 2025

Certain Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 32 Requirements

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Department of Defense

Close Date: May 12, 2025

Service Contracting

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Department of Defense

Close Date: May 12, 2025

Value Engineering Requirements

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Department of Defense

Close Date: May 12, 2025

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

NASA Flight Crew Training

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: Apr 11, 2025

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new proposed rules.

Upcoming Space Events

The Future of Space Politics

The Planetary Society

March 24, 2025

SBLL 2024

Space Beach Law Lab

March 25-27, 2025

AI for Space and Aeronautics

Space Policy Institute, Universities Space Research Association

March 27, 2025

Open Commission Meeting

Federal Communications Commission

March 27, 2025

Space Sustainability: Bridging Initiatives and Perspectives

SWF, EPFL Space Center, ITU
March 27-28, 2025

Space Science Week

National Academies
March 31-April 4, 2025

ISPRS Geospatial Week

International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing
April 6-11, 2025

Sea-Air-Space Conference and Exhibition

Navy League
April 7-9, 2025

40th Space Symposium

Space Foundation
April 7-10, 2025

Planetary Protection Panel

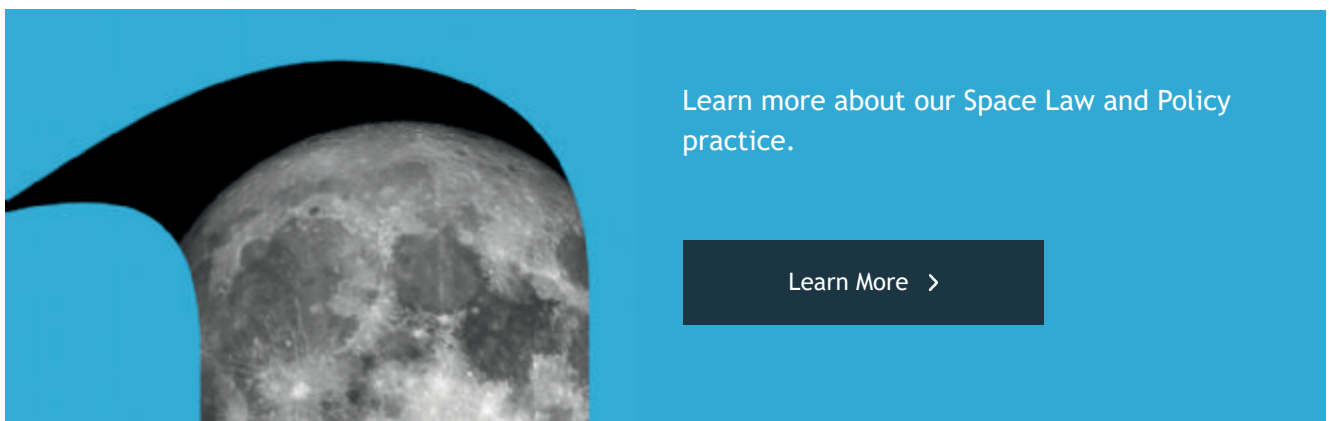
COSPAR
April 14-16, 2025

Public Meeting on SpaceX Launch Increase Proposal at SLC-40

Federal Aviation Administration
April 16, 2025

Legal Subcommittee Session

COPUOS
May 5-16, 2025



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Questions?

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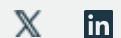


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