



Space Law, Regulation and Policy Update

Good Afternoon!

It's been a busy couple of weeks on Capitol Hill with at least half a dozen space-related hearings, the introduction of a bill that would modernize human spaceflight infrastructure at Johnson Space Center and another that would incentivize spaceport development by making them qualify for municipal revenue bonds. Away from the Capitol building, NASA announced it is considering a Mars mission as early as 2026 while the ESA leadership is weighing how NASA budget cuts may affect science mission cooperation between the two space agencies.

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

[Space Force Chief Makes Case for Increased Funding Before House Panel \(SpaceNews\)](#)
Gen. Chance Saltzman, the Space Force's Chief of Space Operations, appeared before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on May 6 to advocate for increased funding for the branch, shortly after the release of the White House's "skinny" budget. During the hearing, Saltzman contrasted the Space Force's growing operational responsibilities with its flat budget, a phenomenon he asserted is resulting in readiness delays, reduced capacity and unaddressed

vulnerabilities. He further identified three key funding priorities for the branch: deployment of Space Development Agency (SDA) satellites, enhancing counter space capabilities, and improving the Force's testing and training infrastructure. The full details of the Pentagon's budget request have yet to release.

Introduced Legislation & Legislative Updates

Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) has **introduced** the Mission to Modernize Astronautic Resources for Space (MARS) Act (**S. 1722**), which aims to take several actions to bolster National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Johnson Space Center's human spaceflight infrastructure.

Rep. Neal Dunn (R-FL) has **introduced** the Secure U.S. Leadership in Space Act (**H.R. 3142**), which aims to add spaceports to the Internal Revenue Code to ensure that local government investments in spaceports qualify for municipal revenue bonds.

The nomination of Matthew Anderson to be Deputy NASA Administrator has been **received** in the Senate. Please find more information below.

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

Recent and Upcoming Congressional Hearings

(May 16, 2025 - May 30, 2025)

On May 6, the House Homeland Security Committee held a **hearing** titled "Beijing's Air, Space, and Maritime Surveillance from Cuba: A Growing Threat to the Homeland."

On May 12, the Senate Armed Services (SASC) Strategic Forces Subcommittee received a **closed briefing** on space superiority. On May 13, they received **testimony** from the Department of Defense on missile defense activities, concerning the fiscal year 2026 (FY26) defense authorization request.

On May 14, the House Armed Services (HASC) Strategic Forces Subcommittee held a **hearing** to examine national security space programs.

On May 15, the House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics held a **hearing** titled "From Detection to Deflection: Evaluating NASA's Planetary Defense Strategy."

Also on May 15, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a **hearing** titled "FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024: An Update on Implementation One Year Later."

On May 20, SASC will receive testimony on the posture of the Department of the Air Force concerning the fiscal year (FY) 2026 defense authorization request.

In the White House/Executive Branch

Articles and Quotes

Trump Administration to Keep National Space Council (*SpaceNews*)

The Trump administration has decided to retain the National Space Council, reversing earlier indications it might be disbanded. The council, reestablished in 2017 under Vice President Mike Pence, serves as an interagency body coordinating U.S. space policy. While the Biden administration maintained the council with Vice President Kamala Harris at the helm, it kept a lower public profile than during the first Trump administration. The current administration's decision to continue the council is seen by industry officials as a positive move to advocate for space initiatives amid budget pressures. An official announcement and appointment of an executive secretary are expected soon.

Trump Nominates CACI's Matt Anderson as NASA Deputy Administrator (*Space Policy Online*)

President Trump has nominated Matt Anderson, a retired Air Force pilot and current Space Force and Air Force client executive at cyber firm CACI International, to be NASA Deputy Administrator. During his time in the Air Force, Anderson served in roles with both North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM), retiring at the rank of Colonel. Anderson also serves as the Chief Growth Officer of the Space Force Association. In a statement on the nomination, Acting Administrator Jane Petro praised Anderson's industry, operations and aeronautics expertise. If confirmed, he would replace Pam Melroy, another retired Air Force officer and former NASA astronaut.

US Loosens Some Rules for Offensive Counterspace Ops, Wargaming (*Breaking Defense*)

The U.S. has quietly delegated certain authorities over offensive counterspace operations from the President and Secretary of Defense to SPACECOM, according to a May 12 report by Breaking Defense. This shift allows SPACECOM to make more autonomous decisions regarding anti-satellite (ASAT) actions, reflecting growing concerns over threats from nations like China and Russia. The changes aim to enhance the military's agility in space warfare scenarios, though some decisions remain reserved for top civilian leadership. The adjustments align with the Space Force's recent emphasis on aiming to reduce restrictions related to rules of engagement in space.

NASA, in Surprise Shift, May Launch Rockets to Mars Next Year (*Politico*)

NASA is considering launching missions to Mars as early as 2026, following a proposed \$1 billion increase in Mars-related funding in the Trump administration's 2026 "skinny" budget. This shift

prioritizes human exploration of Mars, with NASA spokesperson Bethan Stevens stating that the agency is “evaluating every opportunity” to land humans on Mars. The sudden change, announced without prior notice to NASA staff, may conflict with Congress’s mandated lunar initiatives, including the Gateway lunar station. Nominee for NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman asserts that lunar and Martian goals can coexist, but several members of Congress have voiced skepticism. 2026 and 2028, the soonest time frames when Earth and Mars are closest, are the optimal years for launch.

Growing Space Force Needs More Enlisted, CMSSF Says (Air and Space Forces)

John Bentivegna, Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force, has stated that the branch intends to grow its enlisted force faster than its officer corps as part of a push to expand the operations responsibilities of enlisted personnel. Unlike the other branches, which have around a 20/80 split of officers to enlisted, the Space Force has close to a 50/50 ratio. At an Air & Space Forces Association event, Bentivegna noted that the branch hopes to broaden its enlisted force into the operational and technical backbone of the Force, with officers taking on the more traditional military role of planning and strategy. The move comes amid increased calls for the branch to expand from senior Space Force officials.

Federal Agency Space News

Department of Defense

Army to Roll Out Enlisted Space Ops Specialty (May 2, 2025)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

President Trump’s FY26 Budget Revitalizes Human Space Exploration (May 2, 2025)

NASA Statement on Nomination of Matt Anderson for Deputy Administrator (May 7, 2025)

Dave Gallagher Named 11th Director of JPL as Laurie Leshin Steps Down (May 7, 2025)

NASA to Explore Additional Methods to Send VIPER to Moon (May 7, 2025)

U.S. Space Force

Ashworth, Allvin and Saltzman Outline Fiscal 2026 Budget Priorities to Congressional Panel (May 7, 2025)

Department of the Air Force Updated Guidance on Implementing Policy on Prioritizing

[Military Excellence and Readiness](#) (May 9, 2025)

[US Space Force, Italian Air Force Sign Statement to Expand Space Security Cooperation](#) (May 9, 2025)

International

Articles & Quotes

[ESA Reacts to Proposed NASA Budget Cuts](#) (*Space Policy Online*)

Director of the European Space Agency (ESA) General Josef Aschbacher has released a statement on proposed budget cuts to NASA, asserting that while the ESA remains open to working with NASA on programs marked for funding reductions or full terminations, it will be assessing the impacts of the cuts with its member states. The statement highlights that the assessment could include consideration of potential actions and alternative scenarios for ESA-impacted programs, hinting that the cuts could force the European agency away from certain NASA partnerships. Still, Aschbacher noted ESA's long-standing partnership with NASA and asserted that ESA intends to remain a reliable partner for space agencies both in and outside of Europe.

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)

[NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System \(ASRS\) and Related Voluntary Safety Reporting Systems \(VSRS\)](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: July 7, 2025

[Astronaut's System for Tracking and Requesting Appearances \(ASTRA\)](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: July 7, 2025

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

[Agency-wide Liquefied Natural Gas \(LNG\)](#)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Close Date: June 3, 2025

Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs)

No new NPRMs.

Upcoming Space Events

GEOINT Symposium

USGIF

May 18-21, 2025

Luxembourg Space Resources Week

ESRIC, ESA, LSA, LIST

May 19-21, 2025

Spring Meeting

Lunar Surface Innovation Consortium

May 20-22, 2025

Luncheon with NASA Dragonfly

Maryland Space Business Roundtable

May 21, 2025

Open Commission Meeting

Federal Communications Commission

May 22, 2025

SpaceOps 2025

CASI, CSA

May 26-30, 2025

Civil and Commercial Uses of GPS

Space Policy Institute

May 27, 2025

SmallSat Europe 2025

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May 27-28, 2025

Humans to the Moon and Mars Summit

Explore Mars

May 28-29, 2025

Securing Space Program

INSA

May 29, 2025

NASA-DARES Workshop

NASA

May 29-30, 2025

Space Tech Expo USA

Smarter Shows

June 2-4, 2025

ISAM Conference

UK Space Agency

June 4-5, 2025

Space Studies and Aeronautics and Space Engineering Boards Joint Meeting

National Academies

June 10-13, 2025

Paris Air Show

SIAE

June 16-22, 2025

International Space Development Conference

National Space Society

June 19-22, 2025

International Planetary Probe Workshop

NASA Langley, ESA

June 23-27, 2025

68th COPUOS Session

United Nations

June 25-July 4, 2025

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Questions?

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