

SPACE POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY

ISSUE BRIEFING FOR THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION



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PRESENTED BY



*PROMOTING COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS
FOR SPACE SUSTAINABILITY*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outer space activities are more important to the United States now than at almost any time in our history. Space technology and services provide critical national security capabilities, scientific knowledge, economic opportunities, and the tools to understand and respond to a changing climate. At the same time, the space domain is becoming increasingly complex and congested, and there is no guarantee that space will continue to be a secure, sustainable, and peaceful environment. Three major trends, the rapid growth in new actors conducting space activities, an increasing number of active satellites and debris objects, and the growing potential for conflict, create both opportunities and challenges that require timely policy responses. As the world's leading space power, the United States can remain at the forefront of most space activities, and is well-positioned to enable global coalitions that leverage the contributions of space activities for security, economic, and societal benefits.

Under the leadership of the recently reestablished National Space Council, solid progress was made on updating space-related policy for the changing space situation. While some of the Trump administration's space policy decisions and initiatives have generated criticism, that is more due to the political rhetoric accompanying them than the substance. Many of the Trump administration's space policy decisions built on work started under the Obama administration and continue long-standing principles and goals that have persisted across administrations, Republican and Democrat, because they reflect core American values and national interests. First and foremost among those interests is sustained U.S. international leadership in ensuring the long-term sustainability, safety, and security of the space domain and space activities. This is not done out of pure altruism, but to ensure that that we – the United States, our citizens, government, and companies – can continue to use space for benefits into the future.

We urge the Biden administration to place a high priority on supporting U.S. space activities by building on recent national space policy decisions that reflect long-standing U.S. principles while abandoning the divisive and antagonistic rhetoric that has accompanied those policy changes. Consistency across key national space efforts, such as retaining the National Space Council and building out the commercial space sector, the Space Force, and the Artemis Program and Accords, will help move the United States forward and demonstrate stability to international partners by avoiding the constant reset and lack of strategic direction that has happened in the past during presidential transitions. At the same time, there are significant challenges that remain unresolved and will need bold leadership, both at home and abroad, to be fully addressed.

**AS THE WORLD'S LEADING SPACE POWER AND USER OF SPACE,
IT IS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES TO BE
AT THE VANGUARD OF ESTABLISHING AND PROMOTING
BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFE**

The following are the compiled recommendations across all areas of U.S. space policy.

INTERAGENCY SPACE POLICY PROCESS

- Keep the National Space Council.
- Reform the Users Advisory Group.

ORBITAL DEBRIS

- Give NASA the authority to develop and execute a space environmental management plan.
- Centralize orbital debris mitigation requirements under one regulatory agency.
- Lead the creation of incentives for responsible behavior in space.

SPACE WEATHER

- Prioritize ensuring baseline observational capabilities.
- Work with international partners to augment observations and research.
- Support the development of commercial space weather services.

SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- Swiftly implement civil SSA and STM authority in a federal agency.
- Leverage commercial and international capabilities to the maximum extent while also supporting SSA as a public good.

NATIONAL SECURITY SPACE

- Redouble efforts to improve resilience.
- Establish norms of behavior for military space activities.
- Lay the foundation for focused space arms control.

SPACE DIPLOMACY

- Engage with and through multilateral fora to help shape international consensus on norms of behavior to enhance safety, stability, and sustainability in space.
- Implement the principles in the Artemis Accords to strengthen international space governance.
- Increase engagement with domestic commercial and other non-governmental stakeholders in support of U.S. international space diplomacy objectives.

U.S. SPACE FORCE

- Consolidate military space acquisitions authority under the USSF.
- Clarify the future missions for the USSF and its role in U.S. space activities.
- Develop a national consensus on space deterrence doctrine.

U.S. – CHINA ENGAGEMENT

- Modify the Wolf Amendment to allow for limited space engagement with China
- Increase understanding of the Chinese space sector.

EARTH OBSERVATION

- Support continuity of service for all Earth observing satellite capabilities and continue to champion free and open data sharing principles.
- Enable commercial sector value-added services and promote a thriving American commercial remote sensing industry.
- Recommit to contributing to global problems and promote the role of Earth observation in addressing these challenges.

REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT

- Provide predictability for commercial actors seeking regulatory approval.
- Clarify to commercial actors that they are required to abide by international legal principles.

COMMERCIAL SPACE

- Review, update, and implement the Commercial Space Guidelines in the National Space Policy.
- Establish an international dialogue on regulating commercial space.

MEGACONSTELLATIONS

- Ensure orbital debris mitigation requirements address the challenges posed by megaconstellations.
- Adapt existing licenses to include new findings and mitigation requirements as they emerge.

- Develop contingency measures for the possibility of megaconstellation operators ceasing business with spacecraft already in space.

CISLUNAR SPACE

- Sustain stable commitment to the Artemis Program.
- Continue work to implement Artemis Accords with the international community.
- Continue multilateral engagement on space resources governance.
- Implement the National Moon-Mars Development Strategy.

PLANETARY DEFENSE

- Give NASA the resources to complete the detection, cataloging, and characterization of all Near Earth Objects (NEOs) 140 meters and larger.
- Clarify the existing rules, rights, and responsibilities for a NEO deflection mission and the legality of using nuclear explosive devices.
- Implement a strategy to achieve the goals of interagency, federal, state, and local preparedness outlined in the 2018 Near-Earth Object Preparedness Strategy and Action Plan.