

President Trump Releases Executive Order on Space-Based Businesses

August 26, 2025

President Donald Trump has signed a new [executive order](#) to “streamline commercial license and permit approvals” for US-based space businesses and ensure that US operators can efficiently launch, conduct missions in space and reenter US airspace. The goals of the executive order are to facilitate economic growth and national security, as well as accomplish federal space objectives. This order directs officials at the Department of Transportation (DOT), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to take actions to limit their regulatory review of space-related operations.

The order identifies a variety of potential harms resulting from overregulating, including unnecessary safety requirements, duplicative requirements, a lack of coordination between federal agencies and delays from environmental reviews.

A summary of the reforms is provided below:

Reform of launch and reentry requirements

The order directs the Secretary of Transportation by early December to evaluate the regulations for launch and reentry vehicles. The Secretary of Transportation must determine whether to modify or repeal regulations that affect vehicles with flight termination systems or automated flight safety systems or hybrid vehicles that hold FAA airworthiness certificates, whether to expand the criteria for determining if a reentry vehicle is sufficiently protected against a “high-consequence event,” and whether other requirements are “too attenuated” to continue to be included in the rules.

Development of spaceport infrastructure

The order directs the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Transportation and NASA Administrator to align their review processes for spaceport development and eliminates processes that are duplicative, while preserving federal and national security launch capacity. The Secretary of Commerce, working with the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Transportation and NASA Administrator, is required to evaluate whether states have complied with obligations related to spaceports in their plans under the Coastal Zone Management Act and whether states should be penalized for any noncompliance. In addition, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Transportation and NASA Administrator are required to use “all available authorities” to expedite environmental and administrative reviews for spaceport development.

Encouraging novel space activities

The Secretary of Commerce is required to propose by early January 2026 a new process to authorize individual missions for activities (not involving human spaceflight) that are not governed by existing regulatory frameworks.

Environmental reviews

The order directs the Secretary of Transportation, working with the CEQ, to eliminate or expedite environmental reviews for launch and reentry permits, including determining what DOT functions are not subject to environmental review or whether categorical exclusions from the requirements for environmental reviews could be applied to launch and reentry permits and spaceport developments. CEQ also is required to work with all relevant agencies to establish new categorical exclusions for actions related to spaceport development. The order further directs the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Transportation and NASA Administrator to consider seeking exemptions from the Endangered Species Act for spaceport developments.

New positions and reorganization

With the goal of facilitating the objectives and implementation of the order, the Secretary of Transportation is required to establish a new position to advise on fostering innovation and deregulation in commercial space transportation, and to direct the FAA Administrator to appoint a senior noncareer employee as Associate Administrator for Commercial Space Transportation. The Secretary of Commerce is required to elevate the Office of Space Commerce into the Secretary of Commerce's office. This change means that the Office of Space Commerce will report directly to the Secretary of Commerce, rather than going through additional bureaucratic procedures through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which is where the Office of Space Commerce currently resides.

Some of the requirements of the order will go into effect as early as October, while others, notably the new process for approving novel space activities, are not likely to go into effect sooner than mid-2026.

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Key Contacts

Tony Lin Washington, DC	tlin@cooley.com +1 202 728 7130
J.G. Harrington Washington, DC	jgharrington@cooley.com +1 202 776 2818

Henry Wendel Washington, DC	hwendel@cooley.com +1 202 776 2943
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