

Office of Space Commerce Seeks Comment on Proposed Framework for Novel Mission Authorizations

January 5, 2026

In support of efforts by the Trump administration to strengthen US leadership in space and support the US space industry, the Office of Space Commerce (OSC) is seeking stakeholder feedback on a proposed new, optional certification process for obtaining mission authorizations for novel space activities.

Under the proposed certification process:

- OSC identifies light-touch commitments that applicants must make to protect fundamental national interests, including but not limited to national security, international obligations and safety of third parties.
- OSC circulates the application and commitments to the US government interagency with firm deadlines to be notified of additional identified commitments, while conducting basic due diligence.
- OSC reviews and may choose to “certify” the proposed operations under these commitments [while reserving the right to not certify, thereby sending applicants back through the “traditional” regulatory process].
- Other agencies, such as the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Communications Commission, would either expedite their own processes for applicants with OSC certifications or accept the OSC certification as sufficient for certain parts of their internal analyses.

Access the Mission Authorization Stakeholder Feedback Questionnaire. Interested parties may complete the questionnaire or submit written comments via email to space.commerce@noaa.gov using the subject line “Mission Authorization Feedback.” OSC is particularly interested in input addressing the following:

- Relevant sector of the space industry (e.g., ISAM, LEO Destinations, launch, orbital refueling).
- Feedback on particular elements of the draft concept.
- Conditions that OSC should incorporate/consider to meet current US statutory requirements.
- General comments regarding “mission authorization of novel space activities.”

Although OSC says feedback will be accepted on a rolling deadline, the administration may decide to move quickly, and we encourage interested parties to timely file.

This content is provided for general informational purposes only, and your access or use of the content does not create an attorney-client relationship between you or your organization and Cooley LLP, Cooley (UK) LLP, or any other affiliated practice or entity (collectively referred to as “Cooley”). By accessing this content, you agree that the information provided does not constitute legal or other professional advice. This content is not a substitute for obtaining legal advice from a qualified attorney licensed in your jurisdiction, and you should not act or refrain from acting based on this content. This content may be changed without notice. It is not guaranteed to be complete, correct or up to date, and it may not reflect the most current legal developments. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. Do not send any confidential information to Cooley, as we do not have any duty to keep any information you provide to us confidential. When advising companies, our attorney-client relationship is with the company, not with any individual. This content may have been generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) in accordance with our AI Principles, may be considered Attorney Advertising and is subject to our [legal notices](#).

Key Contacts

Robert M. McDowell Washington, DC	rmcdowell@cooley.com +1 202 842 7862
Tony Lin Washington, DC	tlin@cooley.com +1 202 728 7130
Henry Wendel Washington, DC	hwendel@cooley.com +1 202 776 2943
J.G. Harrington Washington, DC	jgharrington@cooley.com +1 202 776 2818

This information is a general description of the law; it is not intended to provide specific legal advice nor is it intended to create an attorney-client relationship with Cooley LLP. Before taking any action on this information you should seek professional counsel.

Copyright © 2023 Cooley LLP, 3175 Hanover Street, Palo Alto, CA 94304; Cooley (UK) LLP, 22 Bishopsgate, London, UK EC2N 4BQ. Permission is granted to make and redistribute, without charge, copies of this entire document provided that such copies are complete and unaltered and identify Cooley LLP as the author. All other rights reserved.