

The Space SSA Transition Act of 2023

Space situational awareness (SSA) provides a foundation for understanding where space objects are now, predicting their future trajectories, and evaluating the risk of potential collisions to operating satellites and human spaceflight safety. With growth from about 1,400 satellites in orbit in 2015 to 7,000 today, and over 60,000 projected by 2030, space is becoming more congested, particularly in some orbital regimes. SSA is increasingly important to supporting the safety of orbital operations.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has been filling the gap by issuing SSA services and information to commercial and non-U.S. space operators. However, an additional civil SSA capability would enable increased transparency, data sharing, use of commercial SSA information, improved precision and accuracy in civil SSA information, and relieve the DOD of providing non-defense related and unclassified SSA services and information. [Space Policy Directive-3 on National Space Traffic Management Policy](#), a 2018 White House directive that set the administration's agenda for space situational awareness policy moving forward, stated that the Secretaries of Defense and Commerce, with other agencies, should cooperatively develop a plan for providing basic SSA data and services. The Administration has started to implement that directive.

This bill would codify the ongoing transition of SSA to Commerce, ensuring necessary Congressional oversight which is currently lacking, and helping foster our growing presence in space. Specifically, the Space SSA Transition Act would:

- Set U.S. policy to make publicly available, and free of direct user-fees, validated civil SSA services and information, and to continually improve such services and information.
- Codify the interagency transition working group led by the Department of Commerce (DOC) and DOD to develop and support a Transition Plan and ensure a full civil SSA basic service provision at DOC by December 31, 2026.
- Support the use of commercial SSA technologies, data, systems, and services.
- Support the development and encourage the adoption of voluntary consensus standards and best practices for SSA.
- Direct DOC to submit to Congress an organizational management structure for SSA at DOC.
- Sunset the interagency transition working group after establishment of SSA services by the Department of Commerce.
- Direct NASA to carry out U.S. Government civil research and development on SSA.
- Direct plans and studies on space traffic management, cybersecurity, international cooperation, data sharing agreements and research strategy related to SSA.
- Direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review SSA transition progress.

Overall, this bill would codify the civil SSA capability at DOC to support spaceflight safety and space sustainability. It would maintain and promote U.S. leadership in SSA and facilitate international collaboration in unclassified areas. It would foster commercial innovation in SSA through increasing standard access to necessary safety information and services. Additionally, it would continue to support improvements in SSA through supporting research and development.