AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

February 4, 2026

Senator Ted Cruz
Chairman, Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell,

On behalf of the over 8,500 members of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), I am writing to express concern over certain provisions of the Satellite and Telecommunications Streamlining Act. While the AAS shares your goal of ensuring that the United States maintains global leadership in space, we urge you also to ensure that leadership in commercial space does not come at the expense of our nation's global leadership in science, particularly the space sciences. Over the past decade, as the population of non-geostationary satellites in Earth orbit has grown, astronomers have shown that these satellites can be bright enough to impact critical scientific observations, due to the sunlight they reflect.[1] Moreover, the communications from these satellites have the potential to cause radio frequency interference (RFI) that compromises observations of the universe at radio wavelengths[2], including those used to calibrate GPS systems.[3]

The astronomy community has actively engaged with satellite operators to develop mitigations for these impacts, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has played a critical role in supporting these innovations, by requiring satellite operators to execute coordination agreements with the National Science Foundation (NSF) as a condition of licensing.[4] As the bill notes, "coordination among relevant Federal agencies is important to monitoring and minimizing harm to the space environment so that... [it] may be well-utilized to the benefit of future generations of Americans." The innovative engagement between the FCC and the NSF is a clear example of successful inter-agency coordination, which will ensure that Americans can continue to use and explore outer space, through *both* commercial satellite activities and study of the night sky.

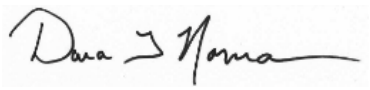
Given the potential threats to U.S. scientific leadership and the existence of an inter-agency coordination framework for mitigating these threats, we are concerned by the "Deemed Granted" provisions in this bill, which in their current form may lead to the inadvertent granting of applications that could have significant negative impacts on federally funded astronomical facilities and the discoveries they would otherwise make. Such automatic granting of an application might also threaten orbital safety, if there is no review of its orbital debris mitigation

[1] These impacts are felt by telescopes both on the ground (see, e.g. Kandula et al. 2025), and in space (Borlaff et al. 2025)
[2] See e.g. Helbourg (2025)
[3] https://spinoff.nasa.gov/Spinoff2019/ps_1.html
[4] Such coordination agreements have been executed with SpaceX, Amazon Leo, and AST SpaceMobile.

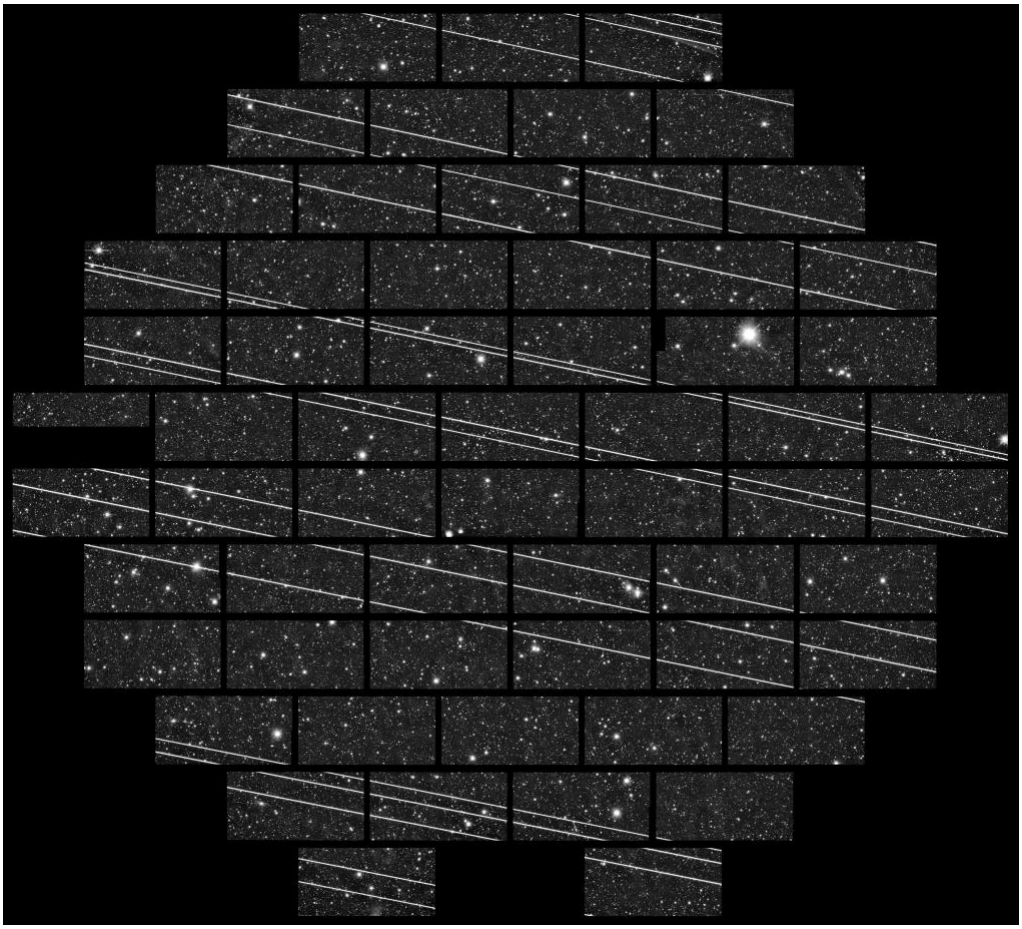
plan. This outcome could harm not only the space sciences, but also other satellite operators, including U.S. government and commercial interests. Under these provisions, there would be no opportunity for the FCC to facilitate coordination with the NSF to mitigate possible harms. While we support the timely review of applications by the FCC, we urge the Committee to codify precautions to ensure that decades of U.S. federal investments in scientific facilities are not wasted, and future discoveries by U.S. scientists are not precluded, by missed opportunities for satellite operators to coordinate with the NSF.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Dara Norman, PhD
President, American Astronomical Society



An astronomical image contaminated by at least 19 satellite streaks, obtained by the Dark Energy Camera at the NSF-funded Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in 2019. Credit: CTIO/NOIRLab/NSF/AURA/DECam DELVE Survey