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May 21, 2025

## ORBITS Act Demonstrates U.S. Leadership in Space Sustainability

U.S. space leadership has the opportunity to be vastly strengthened by a bipartisan bill introduced by Senators Hickenlooper, Lummis, Cantwell, and Wicker - the Orbital Sustainability (ORBITS) Act. If passed, this Act will create a demonstration program for actively remediating orbital debris and require the development of uniform orbital debris standard practices. These steps are necessary in order to promote a safe, sustainable, and stable orbital environment. The Secure World Foundation strongly supports this and believes that this Act would allow the United States to continue to lead in space sustainability, while setting standards that are in line with its priorities and values.

The continued growth of space debris and increasing collision risk in orbit represent a hazard to the economic and societal benefits of space activities. Space debris poses a threat to all operational spacecraft and to the critical applications and services provided by those spacecraft on which Americans rely on a daily basis.

While mitigation efforts taken in the design and operations of satellites help reduce growth in the orbital debris population, they do nothing to address the danger posed by existing debris in Earth's orbit. Active debris remediation (ADR) is necessary, but it remains a difficult technical, political, legal, and business challenge to solve. One of the biggest sources of risk comes from large debris objects in low Earth orbit that are part of the legacy of previous governmental space activities: for the most part, that of the United States, Russia (including historical Soviet objects), and China.

A number of ADR pilot and technology development programs are underway in Europe, Japan, and the United Kingdom, with efforts led by private companies funded by national space agencies. The U.S. government has invested relatively little in research and development of debris remediation capabilities and currently lacks a broader vision to advance space debris remediation capabilities in support of the growing use of space.

By establishing a clear pathway for government-backed investment in ADR technologies and setting uniform orbital debris standards, the ORBITS Act enables the continued safe use of space and reinforces U.S. leadership in promoting the long-term safety, stability, security, and sustainability of space.