

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today questioned NASA officials over reports that they withheld information from a comprehensive national survey of pilots over fears that the results “would upset air travelers and hurt airline profits.” [Source: Associated Press, Oct. 31, 2007]

“The idea that the federal government would put private profits ahead of the flying public’s safety is outrageous and inexcusable,” said Mitchell. “NASA’s survey reportedly contains information – from pilots – about runway incursions, wildlife strikes, and near collisions. These are real risks. If pilots have concerns about them, we need to know.”

Mitchell is a member of the House Science and Technology Committee, which examined the issue today. Mitchell is also a member of the House Subcommittee on Aviation.

NASA withheld results from a national survey of pilots that “found that safety problems like near collisions and runway interference occur far more frequently than previously recognized.” [Source: Associated Press, Oct. 22, 2007]

According to the Associated Press, “NASA gathered the information under an \$8.5 million federal safety project, through telephone interviews with roughly 24,000 commercial and general aviation pilots over nearly four years. Since shutting down the project more than one year ago, the space agency has refused to divulge its survey data publicly.” During his testimony today, NASA Administrator Michael Griffin said the survey cost a total of \$11.3 million. [Source: Associated Press, Oct. 22, 2007]