

(October 31, 2007) Lipinski Calls on NASA to Release U.S. Air Safety Data

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Congressman Says Information Could Help Improve Airline and Airport Safety

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Vice Chairman Dan Lipinski of the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology heard from National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator Dr. Michael Griffin on his agency's management of the National Aviation Operations Monitoring Service (NAOMS). NAOMS has garnered headlines recently due to NASA's refusal to release data collected from an air safety survey of 24,000 of the nation's airline pilots. NASA had refused to release the survey because they claimed it could affect public confidence in flight safety and the commercial welfare of air carriers.

"I am troubled by NASA's refusal to release the findings of this extensive study," stated Lipinski. "The American public understands the importance of air safety, and we must ensure the government and the aviation industry are doing all that can be done to keep air transportation safe."

The survey, which cost over \$11 million and took more than 6 months to conduct, was expected to be the forward-looking tool the federal government would use to identify emerging aviation safety problems. Instead, NASA stopped the NAOMS project - despite the fact that it had enjoyed unusual success in gathering responses from pilots - and has done nothing since to provide the flying public with the insights gained from the survey.

"The safety of the flying public and those who live and work around airports is of critical importance to me, especially with Midway Airport in my district and the proximity of O'Hare Airport," stated Lipinski. "It is crucial that these data are made available in order to give Congress, the FAA, and the aviation industry the information necessary to make air travel as safe as possible."

Administrator Griffin announced at today's hearing that NASA would release the NAOMS data, reversing NASA's earlier stance. In addition, Dr. Griffin noted that NASA plans to release a technical report on this matter by the end of the year.

In addition to Dr. Mike Griffin, the Committee heard testimony from Mr. Robert S. Dodd, Safety Consultant and President, Dodd & Associates LLC; Mr. Jim Hall, Managing Partner, Hall and Associates LLC, and Former Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB); Dr. Jon A. Krosnick, Frederic O. Glover Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences, Stanford University; and Captain Terry McVenes, Executive Air Safety Chairman, Air Line Pilots Association.