

NASA aviation cuts could slow research

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Members of the U.S. Congress from both parties warned that cuts in aeronautics research at NASA could harm the U.S. aviation industry.

The members, along with industry officials and scientific leaders, said the cuts reduce the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's ability to create new technologies for the aviation industry and could delay the creation of a new air traffic system, USA Today reported Thursday.

U.S. Rep. Mark Udall, D-Colo., part of a bipartisan coalition of more than 20 members pushing to restore aviation funding, told USA Today the budget issues could render NASA "irrelevant" to the aviation industry.

"I think it's almost criminal," Roy Harris, retired head of aeronautics at NASA's Langley Research Center in Virginia, said to the newspaper. "We are dropping the ball."

The space agency has undergone millions of dollars in budget cuts for aviation programs over the past 10 years and is currently straining funds to repair the space shuttle and prepare for U.S. President George Bush's plan for manned missions to the moon and Mars, USA Today said.

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