

WASHINGTON, D.C.— U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today introduced H.R. 6687, the Fuel Immigration Enforcement Act, a bipartisan bill to help ensure that Immigration and Customs Enforcement has the resources it needs to enforce our nation's immigration laws in the face of rising fuel costs. Mitchell was joined by Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, as well as Rep. Heath Schuler (D-NC).

Last year, ICE budgeted \$20 million for fuel expenses, but the rising price of gas forced ICE to spend more than \$40 million on fuel, concerning lawmakers that resources could be drawn away from law enforcement efforts.

“When ICE cannot do its job, our local law enforcement officers pay the price,” said Mitchell. “Arizona law enforcement already bears a heavy burden because of illegal immigration, and I fear the burden will only grow if ICE is forced to scale back because of high gas prices.”

Mitchell's bill, the Fuel Immigration Enforcement Act, would require the Department of Homeland Security to use realistic estimates to calculate ICE fuel expenses.

Specifically, it would require the Department calculate ICE fuel expenses based upon the price reported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update. The \$20 million fuel budget appeared to be based on an assumption by the Department of Homeland Security that the price of gas was approximately \$1.62 per gallon.

“ICE is tasked with enforcing our nation's immigration laws, and is absolutely critical to the Valley where criminal aliens set up drop houses as way stations for drug, weapon and human smuggling operations.” The Phoenix metro area in particular is estimated to have as many as 1000 such drop houses. [Source: The Associated Press, Jan. 16, 2008]

“If we are serious about enforcing our nation's immigrations laws, we need to provide the

resources necessary to get the job done. The Fuel Immigration Enforcement Act will help ensure that ICE has what it needs, in the face of rising fuel expenses.” said Mitchell.

In February, Mitchell commissioned a study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine federal efforts to identify and remove criminal aliens in an effort to improve the government’s ability to combat drop houses that act as way stations for drugs and humans smuggled across the border.

Last year, Mitchell met “with local, state and federal law enforcement officials, including Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and representatives of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Arizona Department of Homeland Security” to discuss how Congress and law enforcement can work together to improve immigration enforcement in Arizona. [Source: The Arizona Republic , May 30, 2007]