

WASHINGTON –U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell asked for and obtained a key change to H.R. 3021, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act, to help schools make critical building repairs to protect the health and safety of students and teachers.

Mitchell's request could help schools like Corona del Sol High School in Tempe where, according to The Arizona Republic, students and faculty have suffered health problems ranging from "tumors and cancers to asthma and allergies." [Source: The Arizona Republic, April 11, 2008]

The House passed the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act Wednesday evening by a bipartisan vote of 250-164. The bill authorizes \$6.4 billion in federal funding for constructing more energy efficient school buildings and now moves to the Senate.

At Mitchell's request, the bill was amended to allow schools that fail to meet state and local health code standards to also apply for the new federal grants. According to The Arizona Republic, a 2006 Arizona Department of Health Services study at Corona del Sol "found carbon-dioxide levels that exceed state standards, toxigenic molds and poor air quality." [Source: [The Arizona Republic](#), May 23, 2008]

The amendment containing Mitchell's change passed by a vote of 260-151.

Transcript of Mitchell's remarks delivered during the House debate Wednesday:

Thank you, Madam Speaker (Mr. Speaker).

I rise in support of H.R. 3021, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act, which will authorize funding for modernization, renovation, and repair projects in schools with poor building quality.

Students and teachers deserve a clean and safe environment to go to school.

However, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, one-third of schools, which serve approximately 14 million students, are desperately in need of extensive repairs.

As a former high school teacher, I believe that it is critical to ensure that the grants authorized under this legislation be available for schools in which existing building conditions are putting the health and safety of students and faculty at risk.

Many schools suffer from inadequate building ventilation. When combined with toxic substances such as mold, asbestos, and lead, this lack of ventilation can cause significant health problems. Students and teachers in schools with indoor air quality problems suffer from a range of health problems from headaches, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, to respiratory illness.

Even more troubling, when indoor air pollutants accumulate in an inadequately ventilated school, the air can be carcinogenic.

In Arizona's Tempe Union High School District, where I taught for almost 30 years, Corona Del Sol High School has an HVAC system in desperate need of replacement.

According to the Arizona Republic, some within the Corona Del Sol community have experienced illnesses ranging from allergies and asthma to tumors and cancers.

The school district is struggling to find funds to replace the HVAC system, and as a result, the problem has continued to persist.

I would like to thank Chairman Miller for working with me ensure that the grants pursuant to this legislation can be used to help schools make critical repairs to protect the health and safety of students and teachers due to building conditions.

The Chairman graciously agreed to include a provision in the manager's amendment to permit local education agencies eligible for grants under this legislation to utilize these funds for the purpose of bringing public schools into compliance with applicable health codes.

Students and teachers should never have to compromise their health and safety to attend school, and this legislation will help prevent this from happening.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

I yield back.