

SCOTTSDALE – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell donated his 2008 congressional pay raise to 10 local charities and pledged to continue his fight to block the automatic pay raise next year at a morning press conference with representatives of the recipient organizations in Tempe.

“I’m disappointed that we weren’t able to block this year’s pay raise,” said Mitchell. “But I hope that putting this money to work for local charities will help people right here in Arizona and send a clear message to Washington that there are better things we can do with our tax dollars than give pay raises to members of Congress.”

While there are many worthy charities from which to choose, Mitchell opted to divide his \$4,100 pay raise among 10, a mixture of non-profit organizations that reflect his priorities in Congress, his years of community service and in his personal life. The organizations are:

The Arizona Animal Welfare League. The League is Arizona’s largest and oldest “no-kill” animal shelter, co-founded in 1971 by Amanda Blake, who played Miss Kitty on TV’s “Gunsmoke.”

The Arizona Chapter of Sentinels of Freedom. This local chapter of a national veterans’ organization helps wounded soldiers restart their lives. Sentinels of Freedom scholarships have helped returning soldiers – with injuries such as amputations, blindness, deafness, paraplegia and burns – to pay mortgages, undergo physical rehabilitation and adjust to civilian life.

Audubon of Arizona. Started in 2002 under the leadership of former Scottsdale Mayor Sam Campana, Audubon Arizona has grown to be a premier conservation and environmental education program.

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Scottsdale. With nine branches in Scottsdale and the northeast Valley, the Club has served well over 100,000 children and teens with quality after-school and summer programs in a safe, supervised environment.

Childsplay. Today's press conference was held at the Sybil B. Harrington Campus for Imagination and Wonder in Tempe – the future home of this award-winning, nationally recognized professional theatre company for young audiences and families. Mitchell is a longtime supporter of Childsplay and sits on its board of trustees. Also, Childsplay's new headquarters will occupy the former Mitchell School, named for Mitchell's grandfather who served in the Arizona State Legislature.

The East Valley Crisis Center. The Center is committed to preventing child abuse and neglect, and its shelter and programs have aided and comforted nearly 12,000 children since 1981.

Prostate Checkup All Sports Foundation, aka prostatecheckup.com. Founded in 1998 by former football coach and prostate cancer survivor Gene Felker, this organization saves lives by educating and screening men for prostate cancer. Mitchell is also a prostate cancer survivor whose life was saved by a PSA blood test in 1999.

Tempe Community Action Agency. Headquartered in Tempe's Escalante Neighborhood, this non-profit social service organization helps the working poor, seniors, the homeless and others in need achieve sufficiency.

Tempe Impact Education Foundation. Volunteers from TIE provide help to some of the neediest children in Tempe Elementary Schools, including clothing, musical instruments and scholarships. Mitchell and his wife, Marianne, taught in Tempe schools.

Welcome to America Project. This East Valley-based organization that helps refugees from Africa and other war-torn and oppressed regions settle into their new lives with donations of furniture and household items.

Mitchell said he would continue his efforts to block next year's \$4,400 pay raise. He and Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) recently joined forces to introduce bipartisan legislation to block the scheduled congressional pay raise in 2009. The legislation has 22 co-sponsors.