

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today asked House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to include bipartisan legislation to block the automatic pay raise of nearly \$4,400 members of Congress are set to receive next year in an economic stimulus package.

Yesterday, Mitchell joined forces with U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, to introduce H.R. 5087, legislation that would require members of Congress to forgo their 2009 pay raise. Today, Mitchell sent a letter to Speaker Pelosi urging her to include the bill in a larger economic stimulus package.

“It doesn’t make sense for Congress to approve a pay raise for itself while the American people are going through tough times,” Mitchell said. “I hope my colleagues will agree that this is the wrong time for Congress to raise its own pay and that doing so sends the wrong message to the American people.”

If the Mitchell-Paul legislation becomes law, members of Congress would forgo their 2009 pay raise.

In 1989, Congress passed a law that provides lawmakers with an automatic pay raise every January unless they vote specifically to reject the raise. Mitchell introduced a similar bill to block the 2008 pay raise last year. Despite gaining 29 cosponsors, the legislation was not heard on the House floor.

The 2008 pay raise, which Mitchell tried to block, is now in effect. Mitchell has pledged to donate his pay raise to charity.

Text of Mitchell’s letter to Speaker Pelosi:

January 23, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, DC 20510

Madam Speaker:

Yesterday our colleague Dr. Ron Paul and I introduced H.R. 5087, a bill to block the automatic pay raise Members of Congress are scheduled to receive next year.

I hope you will agree that this is the wrong time for Congress to raise its own pay and that doing so sends the wrong message to the American people. I urge you to support H.R. 5087 and include it as a part of the upcoming economic stimulus package.

As you work with the President and Republican leadership to build a bipartisan economic

stimulus package to strengthen the nation's weakening economy, I know you are familiar with the statistics: nationwide inflation shot up 6 percent in 2007 and the same gallon of gas that cost \$2.20 a year ago costs more than \$3 today. New home construction dropped 25 percent, the largest decrease in 27 years. Fears of a recession have sent the stock market into a tailspin. Unemployment is up; home sales are down; and markets around the world are on shaky ground.

Even in my home state of Arizona, which for so long seemed immune to economic woes that plagued other parts of the country, is feeling the effects of the Bush recession. Unemployment in my state rose 42 percent between September and December alone, and now 143,800 Arizonans are unemployed. In the East Valley, which I represent, foreclosures increased more than 500 percent in 2007 and in metro Phoenix, 10,000 homes were foreclosed – an 88 percent increase over 2006. Home prices fell 11 percent.

The American people didn't get a pay raise this year. I do not know how in good conscience, we, as their representatives in Congress can not only accept one, but insist on another one for next year. When I campaigned for Congress nearly two years ago, I heard from the people in my District that they were disappointed that Members of Congress approved their own pay raise, but cut critical services that made a significant impact on the lives of everyday Americans. Americans are suffering right now and I hope this Congress has the courage to change course.

Thank you, as always, for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell
Member of Congress