

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Reps. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., and Ron Paul, R-Texas, joined forces today to introduce legislation to block the automatic pay raise of nearly \$4,400 members of Congress are set to receive next year.

“The American people didn’t get a pay raise this year,” said Mitchell. “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.”

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

Mitchell urged House leadership to seize the opportunity and hear the new bill.

“Americans are suffering and instead of feeling that pain, Congress is approving pay raises to further insulate Members from it,” said Mitchell. “If you want to know why people hate Washington and feel that it is out of touch, it is precisely because of moves like this.”

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

Mitchell entered the following statement into the Congressional Record:

“Madam Speaker, earlier today my colleague Dr. Ron Paul and I introduced H.R. 5087, the Stop the Congressional Pay Raise Act of 2008, to block the automatic pay raise Members of Congress are scheduled to receive next year.

“As you may recall, I introduced a similar bill last year seeking to prevent an automatic pay raise for members of Congress from taking effect this year.

“Unfortunately, despite the support of 29 cosponsors, last year’s bill failed to reach the floor. As a result, every Member is now receiving \$169,300 this year, a \$4,100 increase from last year.

“Madam Speaker, the American people didn’t get a \$4,100 pay raise this year. I do not know how in good conscience we, as their representatives in Congress, can accept one.

“Our nation is at war, we have a national debt of more than \$9 trillion, and 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.

“In December, the unemployment rate rose in 46 states as well as the District of Columbia.

“In my home state of Arizona, unemployment rose 42 percent between September and December alone, leaving 143,800 unemployed.

“Compounding the situation, nationwide inflation shot up 6 percent in 2007, the largest jump in 26 years. The same gallon of gas that cost \$2.20 a year ago now costs more than \$3. And new home construction dropped 25 percent, the largest decrease in 27 years.

“When Members of Congress accept this pay raise, we send the wrong message.

“Americans are suffering and instead of feeling that pain, Congress is approving pay raises to further insulate us from it. If you want to know why people hate Washington and feel that it is out of touch, it is precisely because of moves like this.

“I will be donating my 2008 pay raise to charity and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

“I also encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5087 to stop next year’s pay raise for Members of Congress.”