

WASHINGTON— While U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell weighs his upcoming vote on a compromise House-Senate economic stimulus package, he is hearing from a broad coalition of local employers, elected officials and educators calling for decisive and immediate Congressional action to stem massive Arizona job losses.

Employers described an Arizona economy in turmoil, but one that would also benefit profoundly from investment in critical infrastructure projects, tax relief and other job-creating measures outlined in H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

As of December 2008, the unemployment rate in Arizona had risen to 6.9 percent – up from 4.2 percent in December of 2007 – accounting for a total loss of over 115,000 jobs in that period. Although unemployment numbers have not yet been released for January, they are expected to be even higher. [Source: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Statistics, January 27, 2009; Phoenix Business Journal, February 6, 2009;].

The House-Senate compromise will create or save more than 4 million jobs around the country. In Arizona it will create or preserve 74,000, including more than 8,000 in the state's Fifth Congressional District. [Source: The Arizona Republic, February 12, 2009; ; The White House, February 12, 2009]

Below is a sampling of what Congressman Mitchell has heard:

- David M. Martin, Arizona Chapter, Associated General Contractors: “Over the past year, the construction profession in Arizona has lost nearly three times more jobs than any other sector. This package will provide a much need tourniquet to the bleeding construction job losses in Arizona. For every billion dollars spent on infrastructure projects, it creates or sustains over 21,500 jobs. This package provides a much needed jolt to the economy and the long-term benefits are the tangible assets of critical infrastructure which contribute to an increased quality of life for all of us.”

- Steve Trussell, Executive Director, Arizona Rock Products Association: “Because of the slowing economy, 65 mines in Arizona that supply critical materials have been shut down over the past year. Investment in transportation and infrastructure projects not only helps the construction industry, they also provide a much needed boost to material suppliers, equipment vendors and so on. We urge Congress to act quickly.”

- Michael M. Crow, President, Arizona State University: “Given the fiscal stresses Arizona is experiencing at the state level a robust stimulus package is critical for ASU to continue to meet the needs and expectations of the people of Arizona and the nation.”

- Dave Raymond, President, American Council of Engineering Companies of Arizona: “In reality, the number of infrastructure projects that are ready to be contracted and started within the next 90 to 180 days far exceeds the funding in the current stimulus package. We could easily absorb twice the infrastructure investment that is currently contained in the stimulus package. The increased investment would provide a substantial and immediate boost to our economy in Arizona.”

- Scott Smith, Mayor of Mesa: “The economic downturn is hitting every sector of Arizona’s workforce hard. The tax cuts and infrastructure investments included in this stimulus package will reap long-term rewards for our citizens at a time when it’s needed the most. Using federal funding to speed up the construction of critical transportation projects such as the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport is going to both jump-start our waning construction industry, and provide tangible benefits for future generations.”

- Boyd Dunn, Mayor of Chandler: "Both as a mayor and the President of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns, I appreciate the regional effort that has been made to bring forward a very critical set of projects. It is clear that a lot of thought has gone into the creation of this package. With the infrastructure projects proposed, we will create a substantial number of new jobs, while simultaneously providing services to the region that, given our economic troubles, might otherwise be postponed for the foreseeable future."

- Phil Gordon, Mayor of Phoenix: "No bill is perfect – but this is what we need. It contains money for transportation, water and sewer projects, mass transit, energy and home weatherization -- all areas that will create jobs IN ARIZONA by the tens of thousands. It will help keep our economy from falling even deeper into a hole, and facilitate the recovery."

- Don P. Manthe, P.E., President-Elect of AZ Water Association: "AZ Water urges your support for including water and wastewater infrastructure in the Stimulus. Without adequate water resources, our State cannot prosper. These infrastructure projects not only protect public health and the environment, but they are very labor intensive. It is critical that water utilities of all sizes must be eligible for stimulus funds - there are numerous large-system water projects ready to go that can immediately put thousands of people to work in the State of Arizona. In addition to directly putting people to work, investments on water and wastewater infrastructure highly stimulate other economic activities. Water projects depend on Arizona pipe, fittings, cement, aggregates, and other products. It is estimated that every job created in building our water systems creates over 3.6 jobs elsewhere and every dollar invested in water infrastructure adds \$6.35 to the economy. Needless to say, investments in water infrastructure also create lasting benefits by strengthening public health, safety, and our quality of life."

· Joseph A. Husband, Immediate Past President and Legislative Committee Chair, Arizona Airports Association : "Arizona's airports have a significant number of projects that are designed, approved, and ready to construct due to recent reductions and deferrals in the Federal and State grant programs. These projects can be implemented quickly and begin contributing to the economic recovery efforts. A significant amount of the Arizona airport's \$38 billion in annual economic impact within the state is contributed through infrastructure development and airport construction. Airport construction and design clearly translates to jobs, spending, and potential recovery throughout the communities in Arizona."

- Ken Strobeck, Executive Director, League of Arizona Cities and Towns: "Cities and towns in Arizona are experiencing dramatic revenue reductions — often between 25 and 30 percent -- primarily due to sharp declines in sales taxes. As a result, many infrastructure projects that are fully planned and ready to build have been put on hold.

Economic stimulus funds from the federal government that go directly to cities can be put to work immediately and would be the quickest and most efficient way to get dollars circulating in the economy since nearly all infrastructure projects in Arizona are built through the awarding of contracts to private construction companies."

- Michael Neary, President of the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association: "With over 300 days of sunshine here in Arizona, we have the opportunity to brighten our future, improve our economy and air quality, through an investment in solar energy. The critical investment in solar energy in the economic stimulus package will not only help create thousands of new green jobs, it will also spur billions of dollars in local economic development here in Arizona. It will also keep our energy dollars here in our state, providing additional benefits to our economy. We have the tools in place to take advantage of our greatest natural resource, the sun and the solar energy provisions in the economic stimulus package will put us on a path toward a new, prosperous and sustainable economic future."

- James McDowell, Chief Executive Officer, AAA Arizona: "AAA Arizona is calling on our state's Congressional delegations to back the federal stimulus plan, which will also invest in the nation's long-neglected transportation system. This investment will create jobs in the short term

and provide the foundation for economic growth and a better quality of life in the long term. It is essential that Arizona is in line to receive necessary funding from the economic stimulus package. Funding for transportation projects can provide a much needed 'shot in the arm' for the economy and begin to address the terrific backlog of transportation needs in our state and across the country."

- John Wright, President, Arizona Education Association: "Now is precisely the time for investment in education in America. Our nation's public schools are the avenue to future growth and prosperity for our nation, and the funding provided in the American recovery and Reinvestment Bill will give our students access to that future. This stimulus package will have an immediate and positive impact on every American community – large and small – because all neighborhood schools will benefit."

- Eileen Sigmund, CEO of the Arizona Charter Schools Association: "We hope the federal government recognizes the unique financing needs of public charter schools, especially with regard to our recognized funding inequities. The Association hopes the final conference bill includes specific statutory references to public charter schools accessing funding. While it appears the stabilization funding will allow Governors to modernize schools, it is critical that an equitable share be spent on public charter schools. With 45 public charter schools in the 5th District, and almost 500 in the state of Arizona, it is critical that access for charter schools to equitable funding be adopted into law."