

WASHINGTON— A bipartisan effort to block a \$4,700 automatic pay hike for members of Congress received a significant boost today as four public interest groups endorsed legislation to forgo the 2010 pay raise.

The National Taxpayers Union, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, Taxpayers for Common Sense and The Senior Citizens League said that legislation to block the pay raise introduced by Reps. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., and Ron Paul, R-Texas, is especially important during the nation's tough economic times.

"The timing for a Congressional pay raise couldn't come at a worse time," said Ryan Alexander, the president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. "People across the country are hoping to simply hang on to their jobs, much less expecting a salary increase or a bonus. This is a great opportunity for members of Congress to show they're sharing in the sacrifice and tightening their belts a bit until the economy gets into better shape."

Council for Citizens Against Government Waste President Thomas Schatz said that ordinary Americans are making sacrifices during the recession, and members of Congress should too.

"With a \$1 trillion deficit looming on the horizon, it is inconceivable that members of Congress should receive a pay raise," Schatz said.

By blocking the 2010 pay raise, the Mitchell-Paul legislation would save taxpayers an estimated \$2.5 million. [Source: The Hill, Dec. 17, 2008]

Daniel J. O'Connell, the chairman of The Senior Citizens League, said it is important for Congress to set the right tone during tough economic times.

"TSCL is delighted to lend its support and the support of its membership to ensure that Members of Congress set the tone for executives and other officials during this time of national economic hardship by rejecting an automatic pay increase," he said.

"In light of troubled economic indicators, Congress should reject an automatic pay hike that would pad an already sizable Congressional compensation package," said Pete Sepp, vice president for policy and communications of the National Taxpayers Union.

Mitchell said gaining the support of public interest groups and the public is important to building support on Capitol Hill.

“We’re in the midst of a recession, and our elected leaders need to do the right thing, but sometimes we need help from outside of Washington to get things done,” said Mitchell.

Mitchell and Paul introduced similar legislation last year to block the 2009 pay raise. H.R. 5087 earned 34 bipartisan co-sponsors.

In 1989, Congress passed a law that provides lawmakers with an automatic pay raise every January unless they vote specifically to reject the raise.