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At Tempe's Corona del Sol High School, the old carpets are gone. New tile is down. Carbon dioxide monitors are in place for daily checks. Fresh air is being filtered into hallways from outside and new pipes are ready to chill water for the soon-to-arrive new air-conditioning system.

On Thursday, Jack Hofmann, the project manager overseeing the renovations, gave Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., a tour of it all.

Corona has been plagued by poor air quality and complaints from parents and students. It is in the middle of a multimillion-dollar remodel.

What's going on at Corona - and Tempe Union High School District's struggle to fund the needed changes - led Mitchell to propose a nationwide grant program to help schools meet state health standards.

His addition to H.R. 3021, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act, is awaiting Senate approval.

The bill itself authorizes \$6.4 billion in federal funding for constructing more energy efficient school buildings.

During the tour, Mitchell, a former teacher of the district, asked about the status of the fixes, the cost and the carbon dioxide levels.

Hofmann, along with district director of operation and maintenance Bob Anderson, answered his

concerns.

The biggest piece of the renovation - 10 new air-conditioning units - will be delivered during fall break in October and placed into operation over the next year. The project is expected to be complete by the 2009-10 school year. Until then, the carbon dioxide levels will continue to be monitored, Hofmann said.

"All the tests we've got so far ... the CO2 levels are significantly reduced so far," he said. Later, he added, "The levels, even if they are higher than state standards, are lower than they were. The system is much better than it was and we have no reason to believe the school is unsafe."

Hofmann told Mitchell that complaints about mold on the campus have been overblown.

"We have no mold found in any quantity at a level that is dangerous," Hofmann said. "We found spots ... they come in and remove them promptly."

Corona del Sol has 400,000 square feet of space. It was built in 1978, designed during the energy crisis, Hofmann said.

A too-small air conditioning unit, as well as carpet in the halls, were some factors that contributed to the air quality issues.

"I assume there's a new maintenance schedule?" Mitchell asked.

"No," Hofmann said. "They were doing a good job before. We reported on ourselves and said we needed a new air conditioning unit."

"Once that gets in, will it solve the problem?" Mitchell asked.

"Yes," Hofmann said.

The project was estimated to cost \$17 million, but Hofmann said at this point he expects it to come in around \$15 million.

The district is borrowing money from the state to fund the project.

"It seems to me that it is safe ... I'm very pleased," Mitchell said after the tour. "It seems to me that they got started on it immediately."

School board member Mary Lou Taylor, who joined in the tour, said afterward, "I was very, very pleased. The progress is going along.

"The school is very, very safe. I have a grandson here. He would not be here if it wasn't safe."