

[The Arizona Republic](#)

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"Go Harry!" was parent Mary Wolf Francis' response to Arizona Congressman Harry Mitchell's lobbying on the nation's House floor for the health and safety of Corona del Sol High School students and staff.

Wolf Francis is the parent of two Corona students. She is also part of Corona Clean Air Coalition, a group of parents who for months now have pushed for comprehensive environmental testing of Corona.

On Thursday, the mother was still raving about news that Mitchell, a former Tempe Union High School District teacher and Tempe mayor, had shone a national spotlight on the health effects of poor indoor air quality in schools.

Mitchell asked his colleagues for a change to an amendment to a bill that would provide billions for states' schools districts to pay for building more energy efficient and environmentally healthy schools. Mitchell's change passed along with House Resolution 3021 Wednesday. The change lets districts also apply for federal funding when an existing school building has not met local or state health codes.

A spokesman for Mitchell said the congressman was frustrated that state funding for repairs had been denied Corona even though a 2006 environmental study found toxigenic molds, carbon dioxide levels above state standards and poor air quality at the school.

"Many schools suffer from inadequate building ventilation. When combined with toxic substances such as mold, asbestos, and lead, this lack of ventilation can cause significant health problems," Mitchell said on the floor, according to a statement released by his office. "Students and teachers in schools with indoor air quality problems suffer from a range of health problems from headaches, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, to respiratory illness."

Poor school air quality has become such a problem that the federal Environmental Protection Agency developed a Web site and free kit dedicated to improving school indoor air quality. The EPA cites a 1999 U.S. Department of Education report that found approximately 25 percent of U.S. public schools were dealing with poor ventilation and 20 percent were dealing with poor indoor air quality.

While the bill is a long way from becoming law, Wolf Francis said she and other parents commend Mitchell for his effort.

She said Mitchell's responsiveness to the Corona issue is welcome support. She said Corona Clean Air Coalition members have received similar support from Gov. Janet Napolitano's Office, the Arizona Department of Health Services and several state legislators.

Many state leaders have recently called for updated environmental testing at the south Tempe high school, removal and replacement of carpets with non-porous materials and a state loan to fast track repairs.

But Tempe Union High School administrators and school board members' response had been disappointing, Wolf Francis said.

"We have allies in every corner but the only people who are not in the game are the very people who are making the decisions," she said.

District officials have said no decisions have been made on whether it will allow independent testing or what will replace the carpet.

Wolf Francis said Sen. John Huppenthal, R-Chandler, recently volunteered to mediate between the district and coalition. Parents got another boost last week when the Arizona Parent Teachers Association decided to pass a resolution advocating for clean indoor and outdoor air for all Arizona schools.

Wolf Francis said the coalition would vote Saturday on becoming an official local PTSA group.