

### [East Valley Tribune](#)

Paul Giblin

Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., is donating the pay raise he didn't want to 10 charities in his district. The first-term Democrat announced the disbursement of his \$4,100 pay increase Monday at a news conference outside the future headquarters for one of those charities, Childsplay, a nationally recognized theater company that stages productions for young audiences.

Mitchell is donating his pay raise in 10 equal shares of \$410 each to organizations with a broad array of beneficiaries, including elementary-age children in need of after-school activities and men aged 40 and older who are at risk for prostate cancer.

"I just wish that other people would also go out and support all of these nonprofits, because they are doing great work, they've been in the community a long time, and they need your support," he said.

Mitchell also said he hoped the move would serve as an example to other members of Congress that there were better uses for the \$1.7 million that lawmakers spent to give themselves pay raises.

The pay adjustment became something of a political issue last year when Mitchell proposed legislation to block Congress' automatic annual pay increase. At the time, he said that if his proposal failed, he would give away his portion.

The legislation attracted 29 co-sponsors, but it stalled early in the process, setting up a financial boom for the local charities.

"I tried to keep the pay raise from going into effect because I did not believe that we should be receiving a pay raise with so many people suffering, with the economy in the shape that it's in,

## Mitchell Donates Pay Raise to Charities

Monday, 11 February 2008

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we're in the middle of a war, the deficit continues to grow," Mitchell said.

He said he feels just as strongly this year as he did last year. Mitchell and presidential candidate Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, have co-sponsored a similar bill to block Congress' scheduled 2009 pay increase. However, Mitchell said he doubts that proposal will do any better than last year's legislation.

In fact, members of Congress have introduced similar proposals every year since 1995. None have passed.

Rank-and-file members of the Senate and House currently are paid \$169,300 annually. The Senate president pro tempore and the Senate and House majority and minority leaders get \$188,100 each, while the speaker of the House is paid \$217,400.

Mitchell pledged that if his new bill fails and the nation's economic conditions remain unchanged, he'll give away next year's pay raise, which is expected to be about \$4,400.

"If we're in the same shape financially - in a recession, the budget continues to grow, we're still in a war - I'll make the same effort. I think that it's important to let people know that I share in the pain of many of our citizens," he said.

One of Mitchell's 2008 charities is the Welcome to America Project, which helps refugees from war-torn nations to relocate in the Valley.

Co-founder Carolyn Manning said, "We are going to use the money that Congressman Harry Mitchell has donated to increase the number of families that we are bringing furniture and household items to and giving them the message that the United States is a peaceful and wonderful place."

Mitchell's news conference was staged outside the now closed Mitchell Elementary School in

Tempe.

The building initially was named in tribute to Harry Mitchell's grandfather, H.H. Mitchell, who served as a state senator and developer.

Childsplay is midway through a multimillion-dollar renovation that will transform it into a complex of offices, production shops and rehearsal halls, and rename it the Sybil B. Harrington Campus for Imagination and Wonder at Mitchell Park.