

### [East Valley Tribune](#)

Paul Giblin

U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell said there is no way he will accept an automatic pay raise next year and he's rolled out a two-step approach to dodge the dough.

First, the freshman Democrat has introduced legislation to quash an annual pay raise that he and every other member of Congress is scheduled to receive in January. And, in the event that the House rejects his proposal and keeps the automatic pay raise coming, Mitchell says he will give away his portion.

Each of the 435 members of the House and 100 members of the Senate are set to receive a \$4,400 pay bump in January.

Rank and file members currently get paid \$168,000 a year, while party leaders make \$186,600 and the House speaker gets \$215,700, according to the Senate Historical Office.

Mitchell, a Democrat from Arizona's 5th Congressional District, introduced his proposal to forgo the automatic pay raise on June 28.

But the measure received little attention because it was overshadowed by developments in the immigration debate.

Since then though, 13 other members of the House have signed on to cosponsor the bill. The group includes Democrats and Republicans, freshmen representatives and tenured representatives alike.

Mitchell said he's glad that a growing number of his colleagues agree that there are better ways to spend taxpayer funds.

"The reason I introduced that is I think we've got to send a message to leadership and others," he said.

It would be wrong for Congress to accept a pay raise while so many veterans programs are underfunded and the national debt hovers near \$8.9 trillion, he said.

"We've got to lead by example. And I think that's an important part of what any political leadership is - leading by example," he said.

The legislation is necessary because in 1989, Congress passed a law that provides lawmakers with an automatic pay raise every January unless they vote specifically to reject it.

Other lawmakers have launched similar efforts in past years, but none have succeeded, said David Williams, vice president of the nonpartisan Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, which is based in Washington, D.C.

"We're pleased to see that Mitchell is doing this. Nothing against him, but we'd support anyone that tried to stop this automatic pay raise," he said.

The effort to halt the pay raise appears to have more juice this year, because of the new Democratic leadership's public proclamations of greater accountability and because of the public's steep discontent with Congress, Williams said.

If the measure passes, the combined \$1.9 million in raises members of Congress would have received will remain in the national treasury and be available for other uses.

If the measure fails and Congress allows the automatic pay raise to come as scheduled, Mitchell will give his portion to charitable groups in the 5th District, he said.

"I'm not going to give it back to the treasury. That would really be lost. I'm going to put where I know it will do some good," he said.

Mitchell's district takes in Scottsdale, Tempe, Fountain Hills, Ahwatukee Foothills and a portion of Mesa.