

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Jim Walsh

In a barely air conditioned conference room at Mesa's Dobson Ranch Library, U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., seemed at ease as he fielded questions about everything from immigration to the war in Iraq to President Bush's commutation of I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby's sentence.

Mitchell met with 15 constituents, Republican and Democrat alike, as part of his "Congress on Your Corner" program, where residents spoke with him in a relaxed, one-on-one setting.

"I voted Republican," said Charmaine McCleve, 70, a west Mesa activist never short on opinions.

"I'm still your representative," Mitchell responded.

The two went on to talk about immigration and delays in getting passports. They seemed to agree when Mitchell said, "we need to secure our border."

Mitchell also told McCleve that a database, Basic Pilot, used by employers to determine whether potential employees are legal residents, is "not as accurate as it should be."

McCleve said she doesn't want people dying in the desert crossing the border, but that she doesn't support amnesty for people who have entered the country illegally, either.

"He was nice and I think he was honest and upfront," McCleve said. "He was very attentive."

Others meeting with Mitchell were Democrats, people he had met along the way as a teacher at Tempe High School or as Tempe mayor, and even a former mayor of Benson who happened to be in Mesa and stopped by to say hello.

"He's very nice and personable. I wanted to know when he's going to bring our boys back," said Almeda Spencer of Mesa, an opponent of the war in Iraq who, along with husband Henry Spencer, voted for Mitchell.

"I was hoping more people would come," she said.

Mitchell later said he plans to vote to decertify the war.

"I'm hearing a lot of reports that the war was not good and we ought to be out of that," he said.

President Bush's decision to commute Libby's 2½ -year prison sentence for obstruction of justice also wasn't going over very well with Mitchell's constituents.

## Harry Mitchell Meets With Constituents in Mesa

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"I don't have one person who said, 'I agree with what the President is doing,' " Mitchell said.

Bush commuted Libby's 30-month prison term for lying and obstructing justice in the leak of CIA employee Valerie Plame's identity. Libby is vice president Dick Cheney's former chief of staff.

Gerald McGonigle, 66, who said he put a Mitchell campaign sign in his yard and voted for him, stopped by to exchange small talk and see how many other people showed up.

"I like him, especially in contrast with what we had," McGonigle said, alluding to former Rep. J.D. Hayworth, who Mitchell defeated. "He's a people person, that's for sure."