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Harry Mitchell

Last week we got to see Congress both at its best and at its worst as the U.S. Senate debated immigration reform.

As the week began, good people of both parties came together to try to solve one of our country's most vexing and long-simmering problems.

They took political risks. They made compromises. And while their final product was far from perfect, they tried to do what voters send them here to do - get something done to fix the problem.

By week's end, however, we saw Congress at its worst. Not only did the Senate fail to pass a bill, they failed even to agree to allow an up-or-down vote on the bill they had before them.

This is shameful. At the very least, Congress owes the American people a vote on comprehensive immigration reform. When I ran for Congress, the one thing I heard from people over and over was, "Why can't Congress put aside the bickering and the partisanship and get things done?" I share their frustration.

While the Senate's failure will undoubtedly make it harder for Congress to enact tough and realistic immigration reform before the presidential political season takes over, I refuse to give up. Immigration is too important to Arizona, too important to our nation, for us to simply walk away.

There are still good people in Congress who understand we need to act. And Arizona is depending on us to do so.

Sen. John McCain recently said that a vote to obstruct comprehensive immigration reform is a vote to preserve the status quo, and the status quo is unacceptable. I couldn't agree with him more.

The status quo has allowed 12 million people to enter our country illegally.

The status quo is fostering violent drug and human smuggling crimes, and burdening our local emergency rooms.

Just last week, I met with federal, state and local law enforcement officers who told me the status quo is placing huge strains on their departments. Mesa Police Chief George Gascón [told me](#) that he and his officers need Congress to deliver comprehensive immigration reform because

the status quo is stretching his force thin through illegal immigration.

While I appreciate those who are opposed to particular aspects of particular proposals, I implore these opponents to look at the big picture. Congress' failure to act is exacerbating the very problem about which it is concerned.

The Senate's debate was frustrating, but I remain hopeful. I'm reminded of the immortal words of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "Democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

I believe we need to redouble our efforts, roll up our sleeves, and give America the kind of comprehensive immigration reform that's long overdue.

The writer, a Democrat, represents Arizona's 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.