

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Daniel González

A group of law enforcement officials told Congressman Harry Mitchell Tuesday that crime associated with human and drug smuggling remains a huge problem in Arizona and they could use more help from the federal government.

The Tempe Democrat said he would take the message back to Washington.

Mitchell met at the Mesa Police Department headquarters with local, state and federal law enforcement officials, including Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and representatives of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Arizona Department of Homeland Security. Their goal was to look for ways to improve interior enforcement as Congress prepares to vote on an immigration overhaul.

Not enough attention has been paid to interior enforcement, Mitchell said: "Most people are talking about the Border Patrol."

The Senate may vote on a compromise immigration package as early as next week that calls for beefing up both border and interior enforcement in addition to creating a new temporary-worker program and allowing undocumented immigrants already in the country to legalize. The House is expected to take up debate shortly after that vote.

The group painted a dire picture of the human- and drug-smuggling trade in Arizona, which results in murders, kidnappings, accidents and other violent crimes. Members of the group also expressed concern that an escalation in violence just south of the border involving warring narcotics cartels could spill into Arizona.