

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Colleen Sparks

Recently elected U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, the former mayor of Tempe, will talk to anyone interested at a happy hour tonight in Ahwatukee Foothills. Mitchell, who defeated Republican incumbent J.D. Hayworth in the Fifth Congressional District in November, will mix with residents at an informal session from 6 to 8 p.m. at My Wine Cellar/Lucy's Place, 5030 E. Warner Road.

The Ahwatukee Republic caught up with Mitchell to ask him a few questions earlier this week:

Question: What is the most pressing issue facing Ahwatukee Foothills right now?

Answer: "The proposed South Mountain Freeway and maintaining a high quality of life are important issues on the minds of everyone in Ahwatukee."

Q: How good are the Democrats' chances of gaining more support in Ahwatukee Foothills?

A: "I've learned that the people of Ahwatukee are more interested in a candidate's ideas and credentials than party affiliation. As long as Democrats continue to offer strong candidates with good ideas, we'll do well."

Q: Do you think there are enough Democrats in Ahwatukee Foothills for a decent turnout at Happy Hour Friday?

A: "Of course. And I know many of my Republican and Independent friends will be joining us, as well. I'm looking forward to it."

Q: Do you see the proposed South Mountain Freeway coming through Ahwatukee?

A: "I do not believe building the proposed freeway in its current alignment is a realistic option. Not only does the freeway proposal fail to effectively deal with the problems it was intended to solve, but it also would create new and very significant problems for Ahwatukee."

Q: What's your favorite Arizona drink? Can you get it in Washington, D.C.?

A: "My favorite drink is orange juice. I can get it in Washington, but not juice made from Arizona oranges."

Q: Do you have a favorite Ahwatukee restaurant?

A: "I enjoy Caffé Boa on Elliot Road."

Q: Being a native Arizonan, what's the one biggest adjustment to life in D.C.?

A: "It has to be the unpredictable weather. I've enjoyed sunny days my entire life and this is the first time I have ever had to deal with snow."

Q: When you were growing up nearby did you ever come out to the area that is now Ahwatukee? I have heard it was a popular place for Jeeps, horseback riding and that kind of thing.

A: "I did. When I was a kid, I liked hiking and bike riding through Ahwatukee up to the Marcos de Niza Rock."

Q: Which Arizona historical figure do you most identify with?

A: "Arizona Gov. Howard Pyle, who, like me, was also from Tempe. I knew him well, and respected his willingness to work across party lines. That's something I have tried to do my entire career as well."

Q: Are you a hiker? If so, where can we find you out on the trail in Arizona?

A: "I don't hike as often as I used to. My favorite trails are in the South Mountain Park and Preserve."

Q: How often do you plan to come back to visit Ahwatukee?

A: "I visit Ahwatukee pretty frequently. My wife, Marianne, taught at Mountain Pointe High School so we have a special affinity for the Ahwatukee community and we've made a lot of friends here, too."