

### [East Valley Tribune](#)

Paul Giblin

Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., has called for an investigation into reports of deplorable conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., which cares for wounded U.S. troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It is appalling and absolutely unacceptable for our wounded troops to return from the front lines and receive this kind of treatment," said Mitchell, chairman of the oversight and investigations subcommittee of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"We are going to investigate this and do everything we can to make sure this never happens to our brave men and women again," said Mitchell, who represents Scottsdale and Tempe.

The Washington Post documented in stories last weekend the deteriorating conditions at Building 18, a former hotel near the medical center that houses some out patients and their families.

The conditions include mold, rot, mice, cockroaches, stained carpets and cheap mattresses, plus what the newspaper termed "bureaucratic indifference" that has impeded some veterans' recoveries.

"As chairman of Oversight and Investigations, we're going to check and find out how these conditions got to the way they are," Mitchell told the Tribune. "What are the conditions there? What are they doing about it? And, hopefully, that these (conditions) aren't in other veterans' hospitals as well."

He has asked for a joint hearing with the House Armed Services Oversight Committee to address the matter.

Other members of Congress and President Bush also have called for investigations.

Meanwhile, senior defense officials said they took full responsibility for the poor-quality housing and bureaucratic hassles documented by the Post.

"Several matters reported ... are serious matters. They deserve immediate attention and they are getting immediate attention," William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said at a Pentagon briefing Wednesday.

Mitchell will inspect the conditions next week during a tour of the hospital. He previously had scheduled the tour to visit military personnel.

## **Mitchell Calls for Army Hospital Investigation**

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The quality of care at the facility has a lasting impact on the level of care later required by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Mitchell said. Furthermore, poor treatment of wounded troops could affect military recruitment, he said.

### Office opening

The public is invited to the opening of Rep. Harry Mitchell's Scottsdale office.

WHEN: 2 p.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, with a ribbon-cutting at 2:15 p.m.

WHERE: 7201 East Camelback Road, Suite 335, Scottsdale.

INFORMATION: (480) 946-2411