

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Kristena Hansen

U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell believes Congress does not deserve a pay raise, especially in an economic downturn.

So for the second year in a row, he's donating his \$8,500 raise to charity. This year it will be divided among 15 local charitable and nonprofits.

Mitchell made the announcement Tuesday at Paz de Cristo Outreach Center in Mesa, one of the recipients. The agency relies on private donations because it lost major government funding.

"In these economic times, everything is down," said Michael Boos, director at Paz. "Congressman Mitchell's attention to this is going to reap all kinds of benefits for us."

Boos said Paz served 71,500 meals in its dining room last year and gave out more than 16,000 food boxes large enough to supply a family for a week. Mitchell said the decision to donate was "simple."

"In a time of war and economic struggle, it was inappropriate for members of Congress to increase their pay."

Last year, Mitchell donated to 10 charities that reflected his priorities in Congress, community service, and personal life. Because it's increasingly difficult for charities to meet the growing demand for their services, Mitchell added five more charities to his list this year. Along with Paz, they are St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, Arizona Women's Education and Employment, Inc., Sojourner Center and Tempe Center for the Arts.

15 charities dividing Mitchell donation

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The other recipients are The Arizona Animal Welfare League, The Arizona Chapter of Sentinels of Freedom, Audubon of Arizona, Boys and Girls Club of Greater Scottsdale, Childsplay, Child Crisis Center, Prostate Checkup All Sports Foundation, Inc., Tempe Community Action Agency, Tempe Impact Education Foundation and Welcome to America Project.

Mitchell said it is unclear whether he'll continue his donations next year. He sponsored a bill to do away with Congressional pay raises, but before the bill could be heard, Democrats succeeded in attaching an amendment to a procedural bill that freezes Congressional pay for 2010.