

[The Scottsdale Republic](#)

Rep. Harry Mitchell began his second term in Congress after winning re-election in November. It has been a furious few months as a new administration addressed the economic downturn.

We recently caught up with Mitchell to ask him about the first few months of the new Congress and administration.

How would you rate Congress' job so far this term?

Most of Congress' early steps have been to address the economic crisis. Given the unique economic difficulties we face as a nation, I believe we need to do all we can to encourage investment that will create jobs and stimulate growth. The amount Congress has already spent does concern me. If we expect other parts of the federal government to control spending, I think Congress needs to control its own.

I'm still disappointed by the lack of bipartisanship. I believe folks would be better served if Republicans and Democrats worked together to incorporate good ideas from both sides of the aisle because neither party has an exclusive market on workable solutions.

President Obama and the Congress have committed unprecedented billions to bail out banks, auto manufacturers and some home buyers. Critics say the government has mortgaged the future. What do you think?

As a grandfather, I worry about the debt being passed on our grandchildren. Yet many folks struggling to make ends meet are currently out of work. That's why I supported the economic recovery plan that I believe will create and save jobs now and invest in our future.

I believe fiscal discipline starts at home. Not only am I concerned with the amount of spending by Congress, but with the lack of accountability and transparency on where these dollars are going.

While I joined a bipartisan coalition that included Sens. John McCain and Jon Kyl and Rep. John Shadegg in support of the initial TARP funding that helped avoid an economic collapse last fall, I have continued to vote against the release of additional bailout funds without proper oversight, accountability and transparency.

It is also why I voted against the auto bailout, the omnibus spending bill, and the last three Democratic budgets.

You conducted a foreclosure prevention seminar in your district, and now have much of that information on your Web site. Many people who did not overextend themselves resent the federal government's help to people who did. Why should the government help them?

I believe helping folks stand against the tide of foreclosures and falling home prices is an important first step in this recovery.

Oftentimes, homeowners are unable to contact their lenders, do not have needed information, or they fall prey to scams. The workshop I held and the information on my Web site, www.mitchell.house.gov, was to direct people to resources, information and guidance that can help them make the best decisions to protect their homes and financial future.

Arizona's foreclosure rate ranks third in the nation and every foreclosed home devalues the property of the homes around it. Helping folks stay in their homes during this economic downturn will strengthen our neighborhoods and stabilize housing prices, which benefits us all.

Democrats won the White House, increased their majority in the House and are on the verge of forging a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. As a former high school civics teacher, how healthy do you think it is for any party to have that much control?

I don't believe either party has an exclusive market on good ideas. We need to be driven by results, not by ideology. Regardless of who is in the majority, the American people want Congress to work together to get things done.

I'm encouraged by President Obama's outreach and desire to work with both sides. I believe that is where it starts, by recognizing that the challenges we face today will not be met unless

we defy convention and work with one another. I remain optimistic.

Does it put greater responsibility on your party to solve the economic crisis?

I wouldn't feel less responsibility if I were a member in the minority. We all need the recovery efforts to succeed. Everyone in Washington is responsible to his or her constituents and accountable to the nation at as a whole.

American involvement in Iraq is winding down, but the war in Afghanistan is going so badly the Pentagon replaced the commanding general. Are we just exchanging one quagmire for another?

Our troops in Afghanistan have not always received the attention or the resources that we've seen go to Iraq. I am pleased to see the military working toward a responsible and safe end to the war in Iraq.

While many Americans have differing opinions over U.S military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, I believe that we can all agree that the outcome is of the utmost importance. It will affect our national security and the security and stability of the Middle East for generations to come.