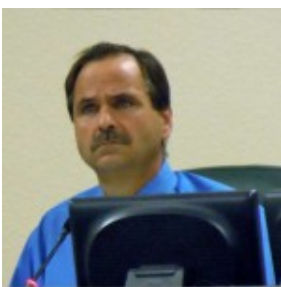


Editorial: Nutting's excuses not good enough

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After months of speculation, El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting was arrested Tuesday and charged with four felonies – most of them related to approximately \$70,000 in state grants he received for clearing brush on his own land. After his arrest, Nutting posted his entire \$55,000 bail in cash, money he said came from family and friends in an “unbelievable outpouring of support.”

In the criminal complaint he filed on Tuesday, El Dorado District Attorney Vern Pierson alleges that Nutting failed to report all his income on Form 700, the statement of economic disclosure all elected officials are required to fill out annually. Besides payments from the state for brush clearance, the complaint alleges that Nutting failed to disclose \$26,040 in cash he deposited in his bank account in 2009, \$6,803 in income for work “pushing stumps” and another \$16,334 in rent money he collected.



Ray Nutting

Through his attorney, Nutting insists he did nothing wrong. “It’s all horse puckey,” David Weiner, the supervisor’s attorney, told the *Bee*, citing a failure to fill out paperwork. “Obviously he didn’t put some things down that some

people think he should have," Weiner told the *Bee's* editorial board. "He's a country boy who works in the woods who happens to be a politician."

The paperwork failure alleged in the complaint against Nutting is no small oversight. Form 700 is the principal tool state and local governments in California use to track political corruption. When an elected official fails to disclose all sources of income, it's impossible to know when official acts – an appointment to a government post, for example, or a vote for or against a contract – serve to line the politician's own pocket.

The final count in the criminal complaint accuses Nutting of violating state conflict of interest statutes when, as a member of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, he voted for contracts in which he had a financial interest. Specifically Nutting approved a series of contracts for two different local resource conservation districts worth more than \$300,000. The board members of these districts sit on a joint powers authority that approved the state brush-clearing grants Nutting received.

In a long piece defending his action posted on his private website, raynutting.com, Nutting states that the El Dorado Board of Supervisors "has no involvement either directly or indirectly, in the oversight, administration or management of the grant program." The supervisor and his attorney strongly suggest the prosecution is politically motivated, an allegation that DA Pierson dismisses as "silly."

Nutting is a controversial figure who has accumulated his share of political enemies during his 13 years on the El Dorado board. Thus it is reassuring that his case will be prosecuted jointly by the El Dorado district attorney and the California attorney general.

But whether or not he is found guilty, he's demonstrated a

startlingly poor judgment by not recusing himself on resource conservation district contracts and failing to fully disclose income on his Form 700s.