

# El Dorado's Pierson, Nutting escalate distrust



El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson and county Supervisor Ray Nutting have long been adversaries.

**By Kathryn Reed**

Two El Dorado County elected officials are accusing the other of improprieties in their respective offices.

District Attorney Vern Pierson says Supervisor Ray Nutting may have more conflicts of interest than what a grand jury indicted him on. Nutting believes Pierson is on a witch-hunt and is wasting taxpayer money in a vendetta that goes back several years between the two men.

Pierson sent a letter July 29 to board Chairman Ron Briggs that was copied to all supervisors except Nutting. It was sent to Nutting's attorney. It also went to county counsel and the chief administrative officer.

In it Pierson says, "Last week our office discovered that District II Supervisor Nutting applied to be certified for Public Housing (Section 8), Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) as a landlord for property he owns in El Dorado

County. On August 31, 2010, county staff correctly rejected his request due to a statutory conflict of interest: As a supervisor he also sits on the Public Housing Authority, and the federal regulations state that no member of the PHA is eligible to receive Section 8 funds as a landlord. (24 CFR 982.161)."

Nutting told *Lake Tahoe News* he is being criticized for looking into whether he could have a tenant at his Grizzly Flats rental who qualified for Section 8 housing. He said he was told he couldn't have such a renter because of being on the Board of Supervisors and added that he has never had such a tenant.

"His actions speak for himself. He blurts things out and doesn't think about what he is doing," Nutting said of Pierson. "He is criticizing me for looking into it."

Nutting further told *Lake Tahoe News*, "Again, he is abusing his office. I did all the right things. He blatantly wastes taxpayer money. It is unbelievable."

Pierson was not available for comment. However, a reason for writing the letter is contained in the document: "I am expressing my concern so that you can take the actions you consider appropriate. ... Given the pending charges and this new information and Supervisor Nutting's seemingly cavalier attitude toward conflicts of interest, I felt an obligation to advise the board."

The letter goes on to say, "Further, records indicate, unlike an ordinary property owner, Supervisor Nutting used his position to appeal this denial to the then Director of H.H.S. who serves at the will of this board. Supervisor Nutting then, on county official letterhead, apparently desperate to secure this rental income (\$1,400 for a detached residence in Grizzly Flats), sent a letter to the regional H.U.D. Director seeking a waiver of an obvious conflict of interest. It appears this

waiver was never granted under federal law; even if it had been, there is no such waiver of Section 1090 violations under state law.”

After seeing Pierson’s letter, Nutting emailed *Lake Tahoe News*, “I read the letter. I should be praised for asking the question for the single mom with children. I received the answer and that is the way it should work. I did everything right!”

Nutting is being prosecuted by Pierson as well as the state Attorney General’s Office.