



False alarm

10:00 PM PDT on Thursday, May 18, 2006

Print edition May 19, 2006 -- Lead Editorial

The Press Enterprise

The public should remain vigilant in fighting political corruption. But trumping up flimsy charges against Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Corona, poorly serves the search for real Congressional malfeasance.

Calvert, who ran a real estate business before entering Congress, sold 4.3 acres of land in January along Cajalco Road near Interstate 215 for \$965,000. Considering Calvert bought the land one year earlier for nearly half that price, he enjoyed a fine profit. Something about that looked crooked to Lake Mathews community activist Art Cassel.

Cassel complained at a March Joint Powers Commission meeting in April that Calvert's sale presented a conflict of interest because the congressman secured \$8 million in federal funding in July 2005 for an interchange at Cajalco Road and the 215.

Only, Calvert didn't do that.

Calvert helped procure funding for an interchange at Cajalco Road and *Interstate 15* -- 16 miles away from his property. And the LA-based watchdog group Center for Governmental Studies noted this week that Calvert's profit matched the rise in market value of the area. That sounds reasonable enough.

The nature of Calvert's private-sector business will often present the potential of a conflict of interest, so the congressman should be careful to avoid it.

Sadly, voters see enough real shady business going on in Congress. Sounding false alarms of corruption only breeds more cynicism about government.