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# TERRITORIAL DISPATCH

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## LaMalfa Reservation Farming

By Lou Binninger

Marysville, Ca.

Richvale politician and one-time rice farmer Doug LaMalfa is a US Congressman representing the territory north of Yuba-Sutter to the Oregon border. Once a local representative, La Malfa was a state assemblyman, then a state senator and now has made his way to Washington. The question is, "Did he drink the Kool-Aide?" The Washington environment can be toxic to your principles.

Known here as a conservative who represents family values, small businesses and farmers, LaMalfa is now a runner for the Chumash Native Americans. What is intriguing is that the Chumash reservation is not in the north state but is located near Santa Barbara about 500 miles from La Malfa's district. Democrat Lois Capps serves the Santa Barbara region and resents La Malfa's running roughshod over the rights of Santa Ynez Valley residents.

Some might picture a reservation littered with unkempt shoddy housing, no yards, and junk scattered about. The inhabitants would be indigent, drop-outs and addicts, with high rates of suicide and lawlessness. That is true in some places, but not for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission



Billboard on I-5 by a group opposing expansion of Indian casinos.

Indians.

Their 154 members each collect \$50,000 or so per month (\$600,000 annually) from the casino located on their 138 acre reservation. Many of the beneficiaries live and operate successful businesses throughout the community instead of on the reservation. They hope to expand their casino and their economic footprint in the region.

The tribe purchased a pristine 1,400 acres from the late actor and vintner Fess Parker (TV's Davy Crockett) in 2010 for a reported \$40 million just before Parker died. Prior to the sale in 2004, the tribe and Parker proposed a residential and

golf resort on the land, known as Camp 4, but it fell through.

The property is zoned for agriculture allowing a home for every 100 acres. That would amount to 14 homes total for the property. However, the tribe wants 143 lots and for the land to be considered part of the existing 138-acre reservation. The land in question is miles from the reservation. This recognition and use change would allow an exemption from property taxes and other fees and regulations.

These are not homeless Chumash. They are some of the wealthiest people in America. The issue here is that they want to change the use of the prop-

erty by bringing it into the reservation.

The tribe offered to sweeten the deal with an offer to the County of Santa Barbara of \$1 million each year for 10 years. Their offer was rejected by the Board of Supervisors, not wanting the more dense development and not wanting more reservation land in the county.

Congressman La Malfa introduced HR 3313 to instruct the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to add the 1,400 acres to the existing reservation. He has 11 co-sponsors, none of whom represent the region in question.

The BIA leans decisively to-

ward the tribes. A 2012 study published in the Pepperdine Law Review called the process "extreme rubber-stamping." Of 111 applications submitted from 2001 through 2011 to the agency's Pacific office, 100% were approved.

One reason may be that the agency's office is funded by money indirectly provided by the California tribes and operates under an "oversight committee" of tribal representatives.

Why would the congressmen get involved? Politicians supporting Indian casinos know there is a payday someday. Tribes are some of the biggest political donors in America. In the last two congressional election cycles the Chumash have contributed \$326,000 to politicians and spent \$1.2 million on lobbying, most recently for La Malfa's bill.

La Malfa's point man Kevin Eastman makes a 'straw man' argument that these are just good people wanting to build a home on property they purchased, just like any American should be able to. What American can build a home anywhere they want?

For LaMalfa and his 11 associates this is about putting your mouth where your money will be.