Prosecution, defense paint differing pictures of Nutting

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

A state prosecutor today opened the trial of El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting by blasting him as a dishonest figure with “trouble following laws” routinely honored by other public officials.

Nutting faces allegations that he improperly hid state income for brush clearing on his family ranch, and Deputy Attorney General Pete Williams railed against the supervisor for casting himself as an advocate for taxpayers while failing to disclose that he is a recipient of public money.

“Mr. Nutting says one thing to the public and does another thing in private,” Williams said. “He talks against taxes. He is against government. But he takes state taxpayer money to improve his property and he does it privately without other people knowing.”

Nutting’s attorney, David Weiner, responded that the supervisor is an honest public official and a dutiful landowner who applied for state grants to reduce fire danger at the encouragement of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

“When it became clear that CalFire was going to use that money to reduce the dangers of fires, he became an advocate. He used it. He encouraged other people it use it,” said Weiner, who said the supervisor broke no laws. “I guess that’s why they call him a hypocrite.”

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