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SUMMIT - Congressman Bob Filner hosted an all day meeting with the public last Friday, giving him and State Senator Denise Ducheny and Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia a chance to take information about what projects are important and the priority they should be given. It was held at San Diego State University -Calexico and about 200 people were on hand to offer their suggestions. *Photo by Steve Larson.*

Summits Produces Lots Of Talk, Any Action to Follow?

By
Steve Larson

There was lots of talk Saturday, but will there be any action?

Only time will tell following a 'summit' meeting set up by Congressman Bob Filner and the State Assembly representatives for this area - Senator Denise Ducheny and Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia.

The three got input from the public and answered a variety of questions about conditions in Imperial Valley and how to improve them.

In the area of public health, the high rate of asthma in this area was a major topic of concern as well as communicable diseases.

"The asthma rates here are off the charts, we must do something about them," Filner said.

The high rate is attributed to allergy causing plants, the large amount of dust generated here and pollutants, such as carbon monoxide and smoke from fields that are burned off.

Along with that same topic, was a presentation made by the New River Committee about what can be done to clean up the mess at what has been called the most polluted river in America.

Congressman Filner has had a history of cleaning up such eye-

sores in the San Diego area and helped save the Tijuana River with the installation of a sewer treatment plant at the border.

That same idea has been proposed for the New River. But where it should be built- Mexico or the U.S. - and who should pay for it have yet to be resolved.

Cecilia Maldonado of KICO Radio expressed her support for Filner and his projects. "We should all be backing him. He did a wonderful job in San Diego and he will do the same here," she said.

Economic Development was also a large topic of discussion and included those projects currently going on in El Centro and Calexico.

The development of new products for agriculture was brought up by Craig Elmore, who cited the development of sugar cane production as a major breakthrough in keeping the sugar processing plant south of Brawley operating. "We need to keep that going and we need to get more research into crops that will grow well in the desert," he said.

Many of those asking were from government agencies looking for funding for their specific programs.

The development of a high speed train from San Diego to Imperial

Valley was one of Filner's priorities.

A few years ago an attempt to recondition and reopen the defunct rail line that already exists was turned down when Duncan Hunter refused to back funding for it.

"How many people would like to see an international airport built here?" Filner asked. Almost every hand in the room went up.

Filner said that the people of San Diego would like a new airport, but not in their back yard. A facility which would serve San Diego and Imperial County was a real possibility, he said.

Meanwhile, the pullout of commercial air traffic from the current Imperial County Airport is still a reality.

"If we all work together we can make this come about," Filner said, using an old theme in political circles. The amount of funding, however, for such projects as never brought up, but would be the key to success on any of them.

In the area of education, a four year university is becoming a strong possibility with the establishment of a new campus for San Diego State University and the creation of new classes which utilize the facilities of both Imperial Valley College and SDSU.