

Nunez visits Mexico to talk immigration;

SPEAKER SAYS HE TRIED TO EASE ANGER AT GOVERNOR'S REMARKS

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Body

California Assembly **Speaker** Fabian **Nunez** on Thursday urged Mexican President Vicente Fox to press for **immigration** reform in the United States and **said** he **tried** to **ease anger** at Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's **remarks** about migrants.

But **Nunez** also found himself explaining his own call for a state of emergency along the border after similar declarations by other states had irritated Mexican leaders.

Not by coincidence, **Nunez's** meeting with Fox wasn't mentioned on the president's daily schedule of public events.

"The perception here in **Mexico** is that this is a call to close the border and place responsibility and blame only on **Mexico**," **Nunez** acknowledged during a news conference after his meeting with Fox.

Emergency decrees

The Los Angeles Democrat **said** the proposed emergency decree "is between California and the Bush administration" and was meant to get the federal government to help "make sure California is getting its fair share of funds" for imprisoning undocumented immigrants and other costs.

The governors of Arizona and New **Mexico** recently made such declarations. Schwarzenegger has **said** there is no need for such action in California and that, in any case, state law does not grant him the authority to do so. Thursday, four Republican lawmakers **said** they would introduce legislation to amend state law, giving the governor the authority to declare emergencies along the border.

Nunez, a rival of the Republican governor, prodded Schwarzenegger to promote the federal Kennedy-McCain bill that would legalize many current undocumented immigrants in the United States.

He also encouraged Schwarzenegger to **visit Mexico**, the state's largest foreign-trade partner.

"People in **Mexico** feel that he's anti-Mexican because of some things that he has **said**, like we should close down the border," **Nunez said**.

Schwarzenegger made such a comment in the spring to a gathering of newspaper executives, but he quickly explained that he meant to **say** the border should be properly secured.

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"I don't think he's anti-Mexican," **Nunez said**. "I disagree with a lot of his policies . . . but on a personal level, I do think that he's a decent human being so I do think that he needs to come to **Mexico**. He needs to mend those ties."

Nunez said he had urged Fox to work with the U.S. administration in achieving reforms that would treat the 2 million undocumented Mexicans in California "with the respect that they deserve through legal residency."

California, he **said**, "is where undocumented workers contribute most to the economy but at the same time it is where they are most unrecognized."

State Republican officials **said Nunez's** trip was orchestrated to woo Latino voters ahead of the Nov. 8 election.

Invoking governor

Before leaving Sacramento, **Nunez said** he hoped to soothe what he **said** was unhappiness in **Mexico** over Schwarzenegger's statement of support for volunteer border patrols. The Minuteman Project **says** its purpose is to help U.S. border agents arrest immigrants streaming across the Mexican border. Schwarzenegger also has called upon the U.S. government to increase border security.

On Aug. 18, **Nunez** called on Schwarzenegger to declare an emergency in California, **saying** it would help pressure the federal government to stop drug-running and illegal **immigration**.

Schwarzenegger **said** there was no need for such a declaration. He also **said** state law allows him to declare emergencies only in cases of war, natural disasters or epidemics.

Associated Press Writer Beth Fouhy contributed to this report from Sacramento.

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