

Cardoza says "One Voice" essential to get funding

By John M. Derby

A group of over 100 business and civic leaders met at the Multi-cultural Arts Center to listen to Congressman Dennis Cardoza on the topic of "One Voice" and how essential it is in attracting both state and federal funding to Merced County.

Cardoza mixed no words when he said that funding is a very competitive business and in order for Merced County to keep up with its neighboring counties, it needs to be visible in Washington.

"Legislators want to know what the grass roots people want," Cardoza told the audience.

He said that Stanislaus County sent a delegation of 75 to Washington and San Joaquin County sent a delegation of 100. These people split up and visited many Congressmen and Senators, sitting in on committee hearing and learning about the lay of the land.

Washington is made up of many factions, however despite what some people think the legislators from the San Joaquin Valley make up a Valley Team which runs over party boundaries. "We all get along," said Cardoza referring to Pombo,

Acosta and Radonovich.

The issues we push for are important to the whole valley.

As an example the current legal battle over Friant Dam, which some environmentalists would like to have torn down. The battle has reached the courts and it could change the whole face of the west side which depends on Friant water to grow crops.

Even though Cardoza is only in his second term of office, he feels he has had some successes. Last year he was able to get two road funding projects approved in the federal transportation bill. Most Congressmen only got one project.

Locally he got \$400,000 for the Campus Parkway, which he feels is an important part of the future infrastructure of north Merced. The year

before he was more successful in getting \$1.5 million for engineering on the Campus Parkway, however he also worked with One Voice in getting a \$1.4 million environmental study of the Hilmar-Turlock bypass and interchange. There was another federal project approved for \$125,000 to be spent on a Small Business training program and a grasslands drainage project in the Los Banos and Dos Palos area which saved 100,000 acres of farm land and cost \$1.6 million.

Cardoza also was success-



ful while in state politics helping to push valley projects. His career started as a City Councilman in Atwater when he was only 24 years old. He was later appointed to serve on the Merced City Council.

Getting a taste of politics he decided to run for the state Assembly and was elected for several terms until the term limits law forced him out. He normally would have run for the State Senate however he opted to run against incumbent Gary Condit for US Congress.

The race was brutal but Cardoza survived and went on to beat Senator Dick Montieth for the Congressional seat. He is now at the end of his second term and is up for reelection in November. His opponent in the Republican party is John Kanno.