

U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller Will Not Seek Eighth Term

Congressman Has Been Dogged By Questions About Financial Ethics

(CBS) JOLIET, Ill. Republican U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller, recently named one of the most corrupt members of Congress by a watchdog group, announced Friday that he will not seek an eighth term.

"I need to give my family the time needed to be a full-time dad and full-time husband," Weller said during a Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce luncheon. **"I'm 50 years old; I've given half of my life to public service."**

His announcement comes amid a swell of scrutiny. A watchdog group recently declared him one of the most corrupt members of Congress. He's fighting a subpoena in a former colleague's bribery trial, and he faces criticism that he did not reveal to Congress the extent of Nicaraguan land purchases.

Weller refused to take reporter's questions after his speech.

The congressman is battling questions about his financial ethics, most recently after it was learned that his wife, the daughter of a former Guatemalan head of state, had formed a non-profit organization with close Weller associates.

Weller's wife, Zury Rios de Weller, registered her non-profit organization with the state of Illinois in June, according to a story in Saturday's editions of the Chicago Tribune.

The Zury Rios Fund's incorporation papers say its mission is to support health and education projects for women and children in Guatemala, where Rios de Weller is a senator in Congress. She is also the daughter of a general who ruled Guatemala in the early 1980s.

The fund's four-person board of directors includes Rios de Weller, Jerry Weller's mother, his brother and one of his business associates.

House members are required to disclose their spouses' finances, but Jerry Weller has claimed an exemption, saying he doesn't have any knowledge of his wife's finances, doesn't expect to benefit from them and doesn't contribute to them.

Weller's wife is the daughter of the former military dictator of Guatemala and serves in that country's national legislature. The congressman's press secretary reiterated the "no comment" policy on Weller's strange land deals, details of which were first reported by the Chicago "Reader" and then the Chicago "Tribune."

While Weller is not running for re-election, he told the Chamber of Commerce he intends to serve out the 14 months remaining on his term.

Weller is also fighting a subpoena to testify in a bribery case involving jailed former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham.

Cunningham, a Republican who represented a California district in Congress, is serving an eight-year prison term after pleading guilty in 2005 to taking \$2.4 million in bribes in exchange for millions of dollars in government contracts. As part of his plea deal, Cunningham agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

Weller represents the 11th Congressional District out of an office in suburban Joliet. The district includes LaSalle, Grundy and Kankakee counties, and parts of Will, McLean, Livingston, Woodford and Bureau counties.

CBS 2 Political Editor Mike Flannery and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

College Pres. Wants Answers From Rep. Weller
(<http://www.dailysouthtown.com/news/555716,091307weber.article>)

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BY Joe Hosey Special to the Daily Southtown

A prospective challenger has called out U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller, demanding he explain his Latin American land dealings.

"It appears that Mr. Weller is more interested in speculating in Central American real estate than in addressing the real problems

faced by the people of this congressional district," said Jerry Weber, the president of Kankakee Community College.

Speaking in Joliet, Weber said he plans to formally announce his campaign to unseat Weller (R-11th), of Morris, in a few weeks. In the meantime, he wants the congressman to start answering questions raised by a newspaper story this past week.

The Chicago Tribune story explored Weller's real estate dealings in Nicaragua and his failure to declare the extent of his holdings on his required congressional disclosure forms. Weller also "indicated dramatically different purchase prices for the land in American and Nicaraguan records," according to the article.

Weller did not respond Wednesday to a reporter's calls for comment.

"He's not answering questions," Weber said.

In 2004, Weller married Zury Rios Sosa, a congresswoman in Guatemala and the daughter of Efraim Rios Montt, who was Guatemala's dictator in 1982-83.

Weller's opponent in the 2006 election, Beecher Democrat John Pavich, called for Weller to resign from his office because of personal conflicts of interest.

Weber said the revelations in the Tribune article only further raise suspicions.

"We know that voters are cynical about what is going on in Washington," he said. "Now they must also wonder what their congressman is doing outside this country."

The Herald News of Joliet