

## 2 Dems join Cemex bill

*Politics: McKeon's proposed solution to 20-year fight gets bipartisan support in both houses*

**Jonathan Randles, Santa Clarita Signal, 4-13-10**

Santa Clarita's liberal congressional neighbors to the south have signed on to support local Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon's proposal to end plans of opening a massive mining operation north of Canyon Country.

Congressmen Brad Sherman, D-Sherman Oaks, and Howard Berman, D-Valley Village, have each signed onto the bill — McKeon's sixth attempt to end a 20-year dispute between Santa Clarita and the cement company.

The two congressmen had also supported previous versions of the bill that have failed. However, this time, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., has introduced identical legislature in the Senate in March.

"Washington doesn't always work effectively," Sherman said. "I hope we get the bill passed this year."

The latest bill is still a long way from being passed, McKeon spokeswoman Lindsey Mask said, but gaining bipartisan support is an important step in making sure any legislation is passed since Democrats control Congress.

"The Senate companion bill is a new step forward," Mask said in an e-mail.

The fight between Santa Clarita and Cemex began in 1990 after the Bureau of Land Management awarded the cement company two 10-year contracts to open a mine that would extract 56 million tons of sand and gravel from Soledad Canyon.

McKeon's bill would force the Secretary of the Interior to cancel the Cemex contracts and prohibit any future mining on the site. The Bureau of Land Management would compensate Cemex for its canceled contracts with money from land sales near Victorville.

The city, which is concerned about the pollution and traffic a mine would bring, has spent about \$10 million since 1999 to oppose the massive mining operation, officials said.