

# GOP lawmakers, Neel Kashkari slam Donnelly immigration remarks

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Assemblyman Tim Donnelly announces his run for governor Nov. 5, 2013, in Baldwin Park. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times/ April 8, 2014)

By Seema Mehta

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Republican legislative leaders and a rival GOP gubernatorial candidate Tuesday slammed newly discovered remarks by Assemblyman Tim Donnelly comparing illegal immigration to war and urging citizens to rise up and join him in patrolling the border.

“Mr. Donnelly’s opinions are his and his alone and are not representative of the Republicans” in the state Capitol, said Assembly Republican leader Connie Conway of Tulare.

The Republican leader in the Senate, Bob Huff of Diamond Bar, said he was not surprised by what Donnelly said in a 2006 speech, noting that the San Bernardino County lawmaker was the sole member of the Legislature to vote against a bipartisan resolution urging Congress to pass immigration reform.

“While his comments ... are frustrating, I am not surprised they came from him. I find his remarks to be offensive and hurtful,” Huff said. “His vision does not reflect the greatness of our state.”

In the speech, Donnelly characterized illegal immigration by saying, “We are in a war. You may not want to accept it, but the other side has declared war on us.”

He also said, ““We are on the brink of a battle unlike the likes of which this nation has seen since 1861,” the year the Civil War began.

Neel Kashkari, Donnelly’s main GOP rival in the gubernatorial contest, called the remarks “outrageous and divisive,” saying, “This is not who we are as Republicans and is not who we are as Californians.”

Donnelly said Monday night that he stood by the speech, in which exhorted citizens to rise and join his fight to stop illegal border crossings. On Tuesday, he defended it again.

“I am not backing away from the fact that we are in a war,” Donnelly told reporters in Sacramento, adding that he did not believe that the remarks would hurt his prospects among Latino voters.

“I can’t speak for the entire Republican Party,” he said. “They’ve hurt themselves by not showing up. I have more support from Latinos than most Republicans in this state.”

Times staff writer Chris Megerian in Sacramento contributed to this report.