

Letter from the Editor's Desk
by Kathy Lautz

You'll have this October issue of the Apartment Owners Association News in your hands about the time our national political campaign rhetoric will be at its most fevered pitch. It might be a good time to remember that we really are all in this together, and that each of us has a slightly different mixture of beliefs and opinions. We can choose to see these differences as a weakness, or preferably, a great strength of our wonderful democracy.

Some may not think it is so wonderful, but it's the only democracy we've got, and just like rental property, if we take care to maintain our democracy together, its "property value" will increase, instead of diminish. As the electorate, let's not act like unruly tenants who care so little for the place they call home that they will subject it to more than "normal wear and tear." Let's remember also to treat our fellow tenants of this democracy with the same courtesy and respect that we would like to be treated. After all, we are also the landlords of our own democracy, and smart landlords know that maintaining their property and appreciating good tenants is the only way to see the big returns that we all want to see.

A case in point was my visit to the BPOA (Berkeley Property Owners Association) dinner meeting, at which Assembly Member John Dutra, author of the tabled AB 2088 was featured speaker. Now we all have heard jokes about Berkeley, and probably passed a few of them on. But, this property owner's association is full of guess who, landlords! Landlords just like you and me, who further must operate under one of the most stringent rent control system in the United States. You will find a wide variety of political beliefs in the mix, but they all share a fiscal conservatism common to landlords. So, one never knows where one will find allies for a particular issue. Keeping a civil tongue and allowing political opponents a certain benefit of the doubt will ultimately best serve the body politic, and that is all of us.

In this issue, the article about how to work with your elected officials will be helpful to our daily political life, once the national brouhaha dies down. Although we all have probably griped about "those politicians" they do surprise us when we actually meet them, because the vast majority are very hard working and well meaning public servants who work pretty long hours, sometimes misguidedly, for what they see as the public interest. If you don't care for your local politicians, well, get in there and elect some who you do like. If more property owners were politically active, there would be less anti-rental property legislation proposed, and existing. The challenge is there. We must continually rise to meet it, in order to protect our businesses.

This month, too, as a result of the magazine's long term involvement in the lead and lead poisoning issue, I have been invited to speak at the EPA Tri-Regional conference on lead based paint. The sad thing is that I'm the only representative of the rental housing industry among a fairly sizeable roster of speakers. Tenant advocates are well represented. And of course, the lead based paint that is still poisoning young children is mostly found in rental property, so it is vital that we be at the table when this issue is discussed, when policy is formulated, when regulations are drawn up and when bureaucracies are created. Its happening in San Diego right now: the city council will be acting on this issue very soon, if they haven't already.

If you missed the incredible "Million Dollar" Conference on October 2, you missed a good one. Our speakers, headlined by our publisher, Dan Faller, were all in rare form. Our attendees did walk away, as advertised, with at least one good idea to make and keep more money in their pockets than before. Don't worry, there will be more of these events for you to attend, but take the opportunity to get a shot in the arm and plenty of encouragement and information every time we at the Apartment Owners Association to put on one of these terrific events for you.

Well, in the spirit of the election season, I'll climb down off my soapbox now, and get back to seeking out the best articles and writers about your business that we can find. We always appreciate hearing from you, and are in the office to answer any questions about your membership in the AOA. Please feel free to call us at (510) 769-7521 if we can help you in any way.