

Did You Know? We Have a Senior Legislature

By Karen Russo

Did you know? Me neither. "It's the best kept secret in town," quipped Senior Assembly Member for our district, Julia Rosenberg. It seems California has a Senior Legislature and has had it for 30 years. Rosenberg was a guest at the May meeting of the Senior Resource Committee in Manhattan Beach, which convenes monthly at the Manhattan Heights Community Center. She came to explain just what this legislature is. Modeled after the State Legislature, it is made up 40 Senior Senators and 80 Senior Assembly Members, each one over 60 years of age. They are elected as non-partisan representatives of California's 4.5 million seniors. Elections are held every four years by the State's 33 Area Agencies on Aging. Candidates file a petition with signatures of registered voters over the age of 60 in their area.

Rosenberg explained that the purpose of the CSL is to identify and prioritize senior concerns; to develop legislative proposals in response to those concerns; and to propose them to the State Legislature for consideration as bills to be authored into legislation. At that meeting, our mouths dropped open when she said it could take five to seven years to get anything passed. Then she hedged, saying that was not always the case.

The Assembly Members of the Los Angeles County CSL meet monthly and report what their constituents have to say. Once a year, in October, the whole state's CSL meets in Sacramento to select the top 10 proposals to present to the Legislature. The CSL has enjoyed success in that about five of its proposals make it into state law each year.

Julia Rosenberg, our representative, has worn lots of hats. She is a pilot. She worked in personnel for TRW. She is a professional photographer and lecturer on photography, covering a wide spectrum from weddings and portraits to photography for aerospace. "I had no political background or aspirations," she says. "But I am a people person. So when I found myself sitting at Starbucks with nothing to read but a senior publication, something caught my eye. It was a two-inch article on the California Senior Legislature. So I called them up, and seven years later, here I am."

A resident of Redondo Beach, and formerly of Manhattan Beach, her district runs from El Segundo to Gardena and includes the Beach Cities, Torrance and Palos Verdes. Being a member of the Joint Rules Committee and the Finance Committee, she goes to Sacramento every month in addition to attending the main meeting in October. And it is all volunteer. Neither Senior Senators nor Senior Assembly Members are paid, except for a modest \$90 per diem while in Sacramento. Funding is by donation only. Code 402 on the State income tax forms is a space for donations, hopefully the \$250,000 needed to

operate. As little as five dollars per senior voter would be helpful. But Rosenberg loves her work. Her second term expires in 2010, and when asked if she'd run again, she said "Yes, definitely."

The top 10 legislative proposals and their authors of this past October are listed below:

AP-3 Senior Legislative Member Krohn: **Sunset Date for Financial Elder Abuse Reporting.** The proposal is to remove the repeal date of the Financial Elder Abuse Reporting Act.

AP-7 Senior Assembly Member Lucero: **Hearing Aid Availability and Cost.** Requires that hearing aids be made available for over-the-counter sales, and vendors be encouraged to submit a plan to the Hearing Aid Dispensers Bureau.

AP-8 Senior Assembly Member Lucero: **Pharmaceutical Expiration Date.** Requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to include a "best used before" date on packaging.

AP-9 Senior Assembly Member Loh: **Nursing Home Reform.** Increases staffing levels in nursing homes and ensures Department protection and guidance for high-quality care.

AP-17 Senior Assembly Member Young: **Nursing Home End-of-Life Privacy.** Requires nursing homes to provide privacy for a resident who has been diagnosed as terminal.

AP-19 Senior Assembly Member Wolfe: **Grading System for Nursing Homes.** Establishes a user-friendly compliance grading system for long-term care facilities.

AP-20 Senior Assembly Member Tucker: **Medi-Care Monthly Allowances.** Increases the monthly allowance for personal and incidental needs for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

SP-3 Senior Senator Griswold: **Property Tax Exemptions.** Increases homeowner's property tax exemption from \$7,000 to \$27,000.

SP-6 Senior Senator Murphy: **Silver Alert Program.** Establishes that the missing persons program called Silver Alert, which protects persons suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia who roam away from home, be mandatory in each city.

SP-23 Senior Senator Young: **Support for the Ombudsman Program and the Senior Legal Hotline.** Requires reinstatement of the State core support of the Ombudsman Programs and the Senior Legal Hotline, and assistance to restore and expand federal funding for California's Senior Legal Hotline.

For more information or to express an opinion, call Julia Rosenberg at 310-316-1013. She is your senior representative. Or contact your representatives to the State Legislature who will be considering these proposals for inclusion into law.

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Easy green

EASY, GREEN AND INEXPENSIVE CONTAINER GARDENS BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

(ARA) - Now more than ever we are all looking for ways to find affordable, earth-friendly hobbies and leisure activities to bring us moments of pleasure in a stressful world. Investing in a planter or two (or more!) this summer can provide you with colorful blooms or delicious vegetables to brighten each day throughout the growing season.

Start from scratch to save. Pre-planted containers at the garden center are beautiful, but you often pay a premium. Consider planting your containers from scratch instead. Spending time in your backyard or balcony amidst your own creations this summer can be a wonderful respite from life's daily stresses without the expense of leaving home for entertainment. You'll feel good because you've saved money and helped the environment too.

Consider using some edibles in your containers. Vegetables, leafy greens and herbs grow well in smaller containers and can decorate your dinner table all summer long. If you have a furry friend in the house, reuse an old watering or food dish and plant cat nip or grass to offer some feline treats.

In order for plants to thrive, a high quality potting soil is recommended, but that can start to add up at the cash register. Save money by mixing your own. Purchase a more affordable generic brand and mix it 50/50 with finely ground bark mulch. Other potting soil recipes can include perlite, peat, vermiculate, sand or lime, but if you're planting a seasonal container, simpler is cheaper and just as effective.

Help the environment. Composting kitchen waste is one of the easiest, fastest and most affordable ways that each person in America can help our environment. The valuable nutrients contained in kitchen scraps are wasted when put into a landfill. Since it is literally free, adding compost to your container's soil is a great way to reduce or avoid store bought chemical fertilizers and still provide your plants with the nutrients they need.

Select your container. Pre-planted containers usually come in petroleum-based plastic pots that end up in the landfill after just one season. By planting your own containers, you are free to select interesting vessels to use for many years to come. Try old kitchen kettles or buckets you no longer use, salvaged old pots found in your garage, or colorful containers found at your local thrift store.

Planting your container. Be sure your planter selections have proper drainage. If they don't have drain holes, you'll need to drill them. To ensure proper drainage for your plants, add a material to the bottom of your container to create an air space. This allows oxygen to more easily reach the plant's roots, which helps the plant absorb the nutrients it needs with each watering. A

great alternative to rocks or broken terra cotta pieces is Better Than Rocks. This planter drainage material is placed in the bottom of containers. It creates a pocket of air within the planter, so it helps provide the critical oxygen your plants need to thrive. Optimal drainage leads to superior plant health and an abundance of blooms. Your pots will be lighter and you'll use up to 1/3 less soil in each container. The product is made in North America from 100 percent post-consumer recycled plastic. Since you can use it year after year, not only will your potting soil savings add up over time, but you'll help keep some of those water and soda bottles out of landfills. "I wanted my containers to be lighter and drain better," says inventor Sarah Atkins. "The results were better than I imagined. My plants were noticeably healthier and my containers provided even greater personal rewards."

Once your drainage system is in place, fill the container with potting soil until two-thirds full, leaving four to five inches for plants. Next, take the plant plugs and set them in the pot. Rearrange until you are satisfied, fill in with potting soil and water thoroughly.

Water every day. Tending your container garden is a daily reward in itself. It's fun to spot new buds, nurture by removing spent blooms and take time to smell the flowers. Daily water is a must. You can save a great deal of water (and money if you pay for your water) by investing in a rain barrel to capture rain as it washes off your roof. Place your barrel at the bottom of your rain spout and use the water for your landscaping or containers.

For a special discount on your Better Than Rocks purchase, log on to www.betterthanrocks.com and use code "btrara09" or call (888) 994-7855. With this special code, you will receive 20 percent off your total order. Courtesy of ARAcontent.com •

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MISSING CHILD ALERTS
Ad Council
Wireless AMBER Alerts
A child is calling for help.

Amanda Gaiger bought these sunglasses to wear on spring break. She wore them only once before she was killed by a drunk driver.

Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk.

U.S. Department of Transportation