



FOUNDED NOV 2004

# *THE VOICE*

COALITION OF MOBILEHOME OWNERS

JAN/FEB 2010 VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

## HAPPY NEW YEAR & HAPPY BIRTHDAY CoMO-CAL

Yes, CoMO-CAL is starting it's 6th year. In this issue we will take a look back at our last 5 years, then take a look forward to see what we can expect in the coming years.

### Thanks for Our Member's Support

First of all, CoMO-CAL is indebted to all of you who have supported our efforts these last five years. We couldn't have accomplished what we have without you. You have allowed us to become a real "player" in mobilehome issues and we intend to work even harder for all mobilehome owners in coming years.

### Timeless Articles

We have published almost 60 newsletters, with numerous articles which will continue to be timely: articles on management problems, interference of sales, resident ownership of your park, the MRL, etc. We will from time to time republish these for those who are more recent members.

The article on **pages 4 and 5**, written in 2005, describes how park owners increase revenue with illegal evictions, attacks on rent control, and interference of sales. You may say "It won't happen to me." Well tell that to Sharon (not her real name). She called CoMO-CAL about a mobilehome her brother owned. He had died and left it to her. Management told her they had to get his roommate out before they would let her sell the home, all the while letting her know there would

be no problem after the roommate left. Well, the roommate is gone and Sharon received a letter from the park attorney, Mr. John Trevellyn, who we have written about several times. We have referred Sharon to attorney Jon Heim. At time of publication, the park will allow her to sell, that is good news.

So beware folks, we are all very vulnerable at time of sale. Park owners have way too much power!

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#### Rent Control Tid Bits (Page 6)

#### Ralph Weber - MH Advocate (Page 7)

A Look Back (Page 8): We have accomplished much over the last 5 years and there is so much still to do.

A Look Forward (Page 9): Let's stop MRL violations.

Current Events: Refer to **page 11** for information on legislation for 2010. The park owners continue their attacks on rent stabilization. Remember out of the 365,000 total spaces in California, about 165,000 have some form of rent stabilization. So it is a huge loss for us if park owners are successful.

#### Jon Heim Answers Questions (Page 12)

CoMO-CAL This and That: See page 15 for important information and changes.

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CoMO-CAL, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization committed to protecting the rights of mobilehome owners in the state of California.

All persons living in a mobilehome are eligible for membership on an equal basis, except management, owners and employees of owners.

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**David Loop, Attorney  
(Aptos): 831-688-1293**

Deane Sargent (Ashland Oregon): 541-708-5131

DVD on purchasing your park—on request

George Turk (Millennium Housing): 949-515-5100

**Failure to Maintain Attorneys**

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**KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID (KISS)****What We Do**

- **COMMUNICATION:** We strive to communicate with any and all mobilehome owners in California. This includes networking residents having similar issues.
- **EDUCATION:** Knowledge is power. We inform you through THE VOICE, our website at comocal.org and our yahoo message board.
- **Everyone Included:** Our desire is to include anyone who lives in a mobilehome in California. Even those who can not afford the \$20 membership - pay what you can - we want you to be informed as well.
- **Phones/email/letters:** We are proud of the fact that we answer our phones and email. We are there for you seven days a week, and although we do not have all the answers, we usually can refer you to someone who does.
- **Attorney Referrals:** We have a growing list of attorneys versed in the MRL listed usually on Page 2 of THE VOICE. Consult this list before calling us for a referral.

**What we DO NOT DO?**

- **Legal Questions:** We are often asked for legal advice. We are not attorneys; therefore we do not offer legal advice. We do however provide a list of attorneys versed in the Civil Code (MRL) with every publication of THE VOICE. Please refer to them rather than call us.
- **UNITY:** “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” It is up to you to get your neighbors “on board.” Mobilehome owners have a big advantage - our numbers. We outnumber park owners perhaps 200 to

one. CoMO-CAL makes it easy to join and get information. Money shouldn’t be a factor - folks can join if they simply can’t afford the annual membership dues. And every mobilehome owner should want good, accurate information. Remember, it’s what you don’t know that can hurt you - right in your pocket book!

**What Can You Do?**

- **Trust CoMO-CAL:** We have a proven track record of providing mobilehome owners accurate, timely and unbiased information. Often times we are the first to inform you of an upcoming issue, as was the case with Proposition 90.
- **Get Your Neighbors & Friends to Join CoMO-CAL:** Why is joining so important. Simply, if they do not join, they are not on our radar. We have no connection with them. They will not be part of the solution (UNITY) and they will not be informed.
- **Be Active:** If you can, be active. Send us an email. Call, if only to say hello. We always have the time to chat with you. Donate a little of your time or money.
- **Promote CoMO-CAL:** You are the one who can make the difference. We can only encourage and lead. But ultimately it comes down to you and your willingness to get involved. Tell your friends how important it is to join CoMO-CAL, to be part of the solution and to be informed.
- **Donate to CoMO-CAL:** Be involved. Make a donation no matter how small. Either financially or actively.

Editor's Note: The following updated article (slightly modified to bring it current) was published by CoMO-LAC in November 2005 before we became CoMO-CAL. It is an example of many articles we have published over the last 5 years that remain timely. Do not throw away your old VOICES, keep them for future reference.

### **Why Are Resident's Often at Odds with Their Park Owners? By Frank Wodley**

Why do we often find ourselves at odds with our park owner and management? And where do "management companies" fit into the equation? Just like any business, a management company often promises the park owner more cash flow and higher profits. The big question is how do they deliver on their promise?

#### **Make Residents Happy**

It would seem as if their business plan would be simple. Keep the park residents happy, promote a community atmosphere and maintain the park. Of course this would insure that residents would stay and any vacancies would quickly be filled. What else could a business do to insure continued rents and low vacancy rates?

#### **Getting Around Rent Control**

Unfortunately for us this simple plan does not take into account other ways to maximize income to the park. Why do park owners not want rent control? Because it takes away their absolute control of rent increases. But there are ways to get around rent control. And park owners often take advantage of these loopholes!

Here in Los Angeles, we are covered by the Rent Stabilization Ordinance when we have rental agreements of 12 months or less. So how do parks get around this? Simple! First of all, park attorneys tell us that prospective tenants (buyers of mobile homes) are not governed by the Mobilehome Residency Law. This means they are not protected by the MRL. The park is not required to offer a "prospective tenant" a 12 month or month-to-month rental agreement. Instead, the park can and often only offers a longer term rental agreement or lease. When signed, the prospective tenant signs away any

rights under rent control. No Rent Control—Simple! (We need to tell CMRAA and GSMOL that they must work to change the law and bring "prospective tenants" under the umbrella of the MRL—this would help bring those new residents back under rent control.)

#### **Park Owners Violate the MRL by "Upgrading the Park"**

Another way to "get around" rent control is through "upgrading the park." On the surface this seems like a good idea—get rid of the older mobilehomes and bring in new mobilehomes which will make the park look more attractive. Of course there is big draw-back when the older mobilehome is YOURS, you will lose considerable money when you can't sell it (however there are buyers for the empty lot—in the SFV a lot will sell for perhaps as much as \$35,000+) and must move it out of the park, but to where? Of course here in California where can we possibly move our mobilehome? So how does this affect rent control? Simple! Rent control goes with the mobilehome. As long as the mobilehome stays on the space, the space is under rent control. As soon as it is moved off the space (other than if you yourself upgrade to a new mobilehome at your own free will), that space NO LONGER is under rent control and the park can raise the rent on the space as the market will bear.

#### **Using Evictions to Increase Revenue**

Another way to "get around" rent control is through the eviction process. Here in Los Angeles, an eviction decontrols a rental space and the rent may be increased to the next resident. This may be the reason some parks put pressure on tenants by giving them seven day notices. A seven day notice can ultimately result in eviction (remember after 3 in one year)

**Selling Your Home? Beware!**

There is something you should know about selling your mobilehome after being evicted. The law prior to 2003 said if you are evicted from the park, you must take your mobilehome with you. You could not sell it, meaning you got zero, na-da, nichts, nothing! So usually the resident would move out of the park and lose his/her mobilehome!

As was printed in the March 2002 GSMOL Californian: “Many park owners have considered eviction of a park resident to be the park owner’s opportunity to pick up ownership of the mobilehome for free, or for a nominal price. This practice is simply not fair, and must be stopped”. So once again the space was no longer under rent control. The park could increase the rent, and better yet they now had your lot (for cheap or free) and they could move on a new mobile home and rake in the profits.

**60 Days to Sell Your Home?**

Fortunately the law changed in January 2003 (AB682 by Ellen Corbett) and this loophole was “somewhat” corrected. Now the new law states that even if you are evicted, you have 60 days to sell your mobilehome. Sounds better, huh? However if it has not been sold at the end of the 60 days, it must STILL be moved off the space. Well, it doesn’t take too much effort by the park to “interfere” with the sale for a couple months—and behold, the park gets the space again free—at your expense—in spite of the “best” efforts of our representatives in Sacramento!

**Upgrade Your Home to Sell?**

Interference of sales is quite a serious problem in many mobilehome parks across the state. Two situations come to mind. First, often times the park will not allow you to sell your mobilehome, suggesting that the park is going to upgrade and you must move your older mobilehome out of the park. The law states that even older mobilehomes do not have to be moved if they pass a health and safety inspection. CoMO-CAL is working to compile a list of reputable inspectors. After an inspection the inspector will give you a list of repairs/changes that you

must fix to be in compliance with the codes. Items such as unsafe porch railings, porches, extension cords, refuse and debris, etc. are common items on such a list. Note that the inspection is limited to the exterior of your mobilehome. Once you are “in compliance” the park should allow you to sell. However if the park does not, you probably need to retain an attorney.

**Interference with Your Buyer**

Another interference is the process where the park approves or disapproves of your buyer. There are only two criteria that can be considered. The verification of the buyers income to pay the space rent and verification that the buyer probably will obey the rules and regulations of the park. A credit report can not be used to disapprove your buyer. The park has 15 days to make a decision and if the buyer is disapproved, the park is required to put the reason(s) in writing. If they refuse, they are violating the law and you would be advised once again to consult with an attorney.

Owning a mobilehome should not be this complicated. Why should we be subjected to these kinds of situations? And usually we are so vulnerable—seniors, fixed incomes, often times not well. We have enough to worry about—why should we have to worry about losing our mobilehome? It is beyond reason.

**Working to Eliminate These Issues**

We must unite and stand together against such treatment. When you see any of these situations happening in your park, to you or your neighbors, please let CoMO-CAL know. We just got a call from a resident in Chatsworth Imperial that the park was not going to allow her to sell her mobilehome because it was too old and it is not even a single wide! THIS PRACTICE MUST STOP. She had attended CoMO-CAL meetings, but had not joined because she was selling and moving to Hemet. Good thing she knew about CoMO-CAL. We advised her to retain an attorney, and have the attorney write management indicating that they are violating the MRL.

### Rent Control Tid Bits

- Rule of Thumb: For every \$10/month you rent is increased, your equity goes down \$1,000.
- Rent Control is Local: About 109 cities and counties in California have some form of rent control. This means about 165,000 spaces out of 365,000 total in California have rent control. About 75,000 have some form of vacancy control (cap on rents when you sell).
- AB761 (Calderon) will phase out vacancy control, i.e. eliminate the cap on rents when you sell. The consequence: many of us will lose our home.
- Park Owners Don't like Rent Control: Especially when they end up subsidising rents for residents who are middle or upper income levels. They vowed Proposition 98 was just the start of their effort to eliminate rent control in California.
- What can you do? One person in each rent control area should have a copy of the ordinance and understand it. That person can be the "go to guy" for others to
- Court Decisions: Recent court decisions have been pro-park owner, i.e. against rent control.

### PROBLEM SOLVING

Needless to say there are no quick solutions to issues we face today in our parks. But progress can be made.

For example, we recently received a call from a park having problems with utility bills. We suggested:

- Organize
- Make up fliers and call a meeting
- Gather information, i.e. have residents submit their utility bills for the last two years - knowledge is power - a data base of this type of information is the key to resolving the problem.
- Have a "core group" who will do the work.
- Know who you can call. CoMO-CAL can help with organization and solutions.
- State Weights and Measures will come out

and check meters.

- Meters must be replaced every so often - perhaps every 10 years.
- Check with other parks in your area - help them gather data also.
- Share the results of your hard work. Network!
- If you feel the meters are not being read properly, then do it yourself and keep a record.
- Often times managers are NOT involved with utilities.

The bottom line, there are solutions. But solutions take time and effort. Most residents want a problem solved for them, today! Unfortunately there is NO ONE out there who will or can solve your problems without your help. Resolve one problem, then go on to the next. Remember the saying: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!

**RALPH WEBER, MOBILEHOME ADVOCATE by Frank Wodley**

I met Ralph Weber when he came to my park to reactivate our GSMOL chapter in 2003. We were talking about harassment, when I got the courage to raise my hand and say "I've been harassed from a time even before I moved into the park." Ralph, in his usual "frank tone" answered "Then why did you move in?" Still to this day don't have an answer to his question. It would take another year for me to become active in my park - I was very "wet behind the ears."

I asked Ralph to write something about his career helping mobilehome owners:

*"Frank: My wife, Shirley, and I will be moving into a condo our daughters have bought so we can be closer to them. We will be in a senior gated and guarded community, Friendly Valley Country Club on the northern end of the Santa Clarita Valley.*

*I will not be living in a mobile home any longer, but I want to retain my membership in CoMo-Cal. I will still do anything I can to help you.*

*I met you in 2002 and was quite impressed with your enthusiasm for trying to get greater enforcement of the Residency Law and noted your frustration with GSMOL also. I was getting older and losing some of my strength to get more real help for abused mobile home residents, so I was excited about your idea to start CoMO-CAL. I think you have done an admirable job and I strongly believe CoMO-CAL will be a major force in defending mobile home residents in the future.*

*Regarding my experience, I was with GSMOL from the first month I moved into my first mobile home in Lancaster in 1988. They needed an Associate Manager and it started with virtually no experience in mobile home living. I studied the Residency Laws and started helping mobile home parks organizing GSMOL Chapters.*

*Later on I was GSMOL Regional Manager for L.A. County. I visited more than 50 mobile home parks during my time with GSMOL. The purpose of my visits was to help strengthen their GSMOL Chapters to have more power to oppose mobile home park owners*

*and managers abuses. I was frustrated with GSMOL's Board of Directors inability to actually help mobile home residents fight. They would not take steps to give money for legal battles to abused mobile home park residents, they would only advise them to organize GSMOL Chapters.*

*I was definitely opposed to Maurice Priest being GSMOL's legal counsel. I felt his association with GSMOL was a conflict of interest because he was principally concerned with organized and establishing resident-owned parks. I did not see where resident-owned parks needed GSMOL; would the residents in the ROP's create their own conflicts? When I resigned from GSMOL in 2004. They never even recognized my long service to them or mobile-home owners.*

*One major issue I am hoping CoMO-Cal can start working for is legislation to change the laws that allow the spaces in mobile home parks to be treated as "renters". I am moving in to a condo community where I pay association fees and see no difference between these fees and rents that mobile home owners pay for spaces. The laws need to be changed so mobilehome owners get the same benefits and come under the same laws as condo owners. The spaces mobile home owners "rent", should be considered as "real property"!!!*

Ralph didn't mention that he was a two-time GSMOL Legacy award winner. He was my mentor when I was a GSMOL chapter president here in Chatsworth.

Ralph was instrumental in the formation of CoMO-CAL, he has been there from the beginning and has supported our efforts all this time. We, together, have held meetings and talked with residents primarily in the Antelope Valley.

I, for one, am sincerely grateful for Ralph's long, selfless service to mobilehome owners. As with most of us, Ralph's health is not what it was.

Ralph, may you and Shirley enjoy your new home. We will stay in touch - I can always use good advice!

## A LOOK BACK

### Communication & Education

CoMO-CAL has been about communication, education and unity from the beginning. We have excelled in the first two. In fact, our newsletter, THE VOICE, is endorsed by many organizations and individuals as the best newsletter in California. And we are proud of that fact.

Although we are not the largest advocacy group in California, we do have the largest **email network**. It was used almost daily during the legislative session in Sacramento—giving members and non-members alike important, almost instant information.

**Our website**, comocal.org, has by far the most information on mobilehome issues, perhaps of any advocate in the country. And you can search for a particular issue.

So in looking back, we have excelled at communication and education. UNITY is another story. In fact UNITY is more about you than CoMO-CAL. Unity only happens when mobilehome owners join CoMO-CAL. Why? Because you are “on our radar” only when you join.

### The Three Summits - A CALL FOR UNITY?

What about the three “summits” in 2009? Didn’t they “unify” advocates? In spite of efforts by CoMO-CAL, the simple answer is NO. CoMO-CAL attended the second summit on April 2, 2009. A morning session included only GSMOL (Bruce Stanton, Tim Sheahan, and Jim Burr), and CoMO-CAL (David Grabill, Frank Wodley, and Bob Hites). Frank Wodley suggested that advocates can serve mobilehome owners best if there were only one group. He suggested that all groups pool their resources and expertise into one. Further, he suggested the formation of a steering committee to study such a merge. In the afternoon session with GSMOL lobbyists Christine

Minnehan, and Brian Augusta, John Tennyson (Senate Select Committee), and others, GSMOL and CoMO-CAL announced the plan to unite. The response from the group included back slapping, handshaking and photo taking. All felt this was a new page in advocacy here in California.

In fact GSMOL and CoMO-CAL worked on a “joint press release during April 2009; however it was clear, as of the 3rd summit on May 15, that GSMOL had decided against going forward.

### A Call for Ethics in Advocacy

CoMO-CAL made a call for Ethics in Advocacy many times over the last five years. Both here in California and at the national level. So far no one has adopted a code of ethics when dealing with other advocacy groups or even their own membership. CoMO-CAL is the only group that follows a code of ethics.

### Saved Residents Thousands of Dollars

If it were not for CoMO-CAL, residents in five parks in the City of Los Angeles would be paying about \$75,000/year more. Why? Because these five parks gave increases 1% above the allowable increase. What does this mean? We must be watchful and know our Rent Stabilization Ordinance. In fact folks in over 100 cities and counties should be watching. Let CoMO-CAL help.

### Brainstorming Workshops

MOHOC and CoMO-CAL sponsored two brainstorming workshops in 2009, one in Carpinteria, the other in San Rafael. Participants felt each was worth attending and suggested they continue. See Page 11 for more information.

### Coalition to Protect Rent Control

Much of our efforts over the last few years have been focused on defeating park owner attempts to defeat rent control and vacancy control. We were

## WHAT NEXT? Let's Stop Violations of the MRL

As we have written many times that the threats are real. If not, there wouldn't be a need for advocates. Today the threats are looming even larger.

### We Have Solutions

We have solutions, but they take you to implement.

### Eyes and Ears

It is important that we continue to confront park owners who violate the MRL (Mobilehome Residency Law). And we only know of violations when you tell us. So please be responsible and let us know of violations in your park. We will help you stop them!!

### Basic Rights

There are a few basic issues that CoMO-CAL wants to focus on in the coming year. Residents have a right to distribute literature related to park issues. They have a right to assemble and discuss issues. And residents should not be forced to move their older mobilehomes.

### Violations Must Stop

So what can you do? If any of these three issues are happening in your park, we want to know. That's all you have to do—CoMO-CAL will do the rest. We will get our attorneys involved. Violations

of the MRL must stop. We can build from this starting point.

### Brainstorming Workshops

We will continue workshops in 2010. We are happy to put it together with your help—just offer your park as a host. GIVE US A CALL!

### Know Your RSO

Let's start with basics. If you are a resident in a city of county covered by rent control, step up and be the "go to person." We will publish names and contact info. This way others living in your city will have someone to call about questions. Frank Wodley @ 818-886-6479 is already the person for the City of Los Angeles. Let's grow this list!!!

### Our Real Challenge

Our real challenge is apathy among mobilehome owners. The threats are real. But who is going to help you if you won't help yourself. At least belong to CoMO-CAL and be informed. Then if you can help organize your park.

Support CoMO-CAL in it's efforts to have the State Attorney General take over enforcement of the MRL. Refer to articles on Washington State's plan.

part of a large coalition of mobilehome, tenant, and other groups that were successful in defeating Propositions 90 and 98 and successful in voting in Proposition 99. We sent out thousands of flyers and posted many ALERTS. We are proud of your participation!

### Other Accomplishments

We have published many articles by attorneys,

including David Loop, Bruce Stanton, and Jon Heim. We often publish information about organizing, resident ownership, management problems, enforcement and many other issues.

Looking back, we are proud of our accomplishments. We thank each of you for your support and pledge to continue the fight. We have lots of ideas. Please volunteer to help us help you.

### TEAMWORK - YOU AND ADVOCATE GROUPS

Let's talk advocacy. Just what do ADVOCATES do? In the case of CoMO-CAL, we are here to provide assistance and guidance. We obviously do not have all the answers; however, we can hopefully point YOU in the right direction even if YOU are not a member. We **network** you with those who have similar problems in their parks and provide a **listing of attorneys** that specialize in mobilehome issues.

And CoMO-CAL **educates** (through THE VOICE, our website, the ALERTS NETWORK, and message board). Why is education important? Remember our saying "Knowledge is Power?" You must know all the facts before you can make a logical and timely decision concerning opposition to your way of life and your rights as an American Citizen and mobilehomeowner.

As a mobilehome resident you belong to a very large family, that, through power of numbers (PIN), you can influence not only your neighbors, but public opinion. The KEY word is MANY! This requires **as many mobilehome owners** as possible working together, dedicated to make a difference.

**Teamwork** is vital to the success of any organization or group. Just look at professional sports, or the military. Every person has an expertise and does a job. All work together for the good of the whole. In the Marines, I had to count on my buddy next to me. And we were all trained knowing he or she will be there for us, watching our back.

Unfortunately today a few share the brunt of the advocacy workload. That's why we ask more of our members.

I say to YOU now that taking a stand and fighting for YOUR rights and YOUR investment is a FREEDOM and YOU AND ONLY YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Please join our TEAM an ADVOCACY

I am just a mobilehome owner like you living in a mobilehome community that cares about each and everyone of you. Until next time, I can be reached at 530-743-2965 Phone and Fax or e-mail at [roberthites@comcast.net](mailto:roberthites@comcast.net). THANK YOU,

*Robert C. Hites*

If you lead thru fear you will get little respect, but if lead thru respect you will have little to fear.

### UPWARDLY MOBILE MAGAZINE (UMM) Published by Tony Gump

Our friend Tony Gump, publishes a terrific, very professional magazine for mobile, manufactured, modular living. Each magazine is 50 pages in full color, professionally laid out. The photos are breathtaking and articles well written. You will find lots of ideas about decorating and mobile-home living. Good work Tony!!

CoMO-CAL has placed ads in the last two magazines. We sincerely thank Tony for donating 300 magazines to CoMO-CAL.

**If you would like a magazine, we will mail one, first class, direct to your door, as many as you**

**want for a donation of \$5 each (they sell for this in the bookstore).**

Here is what some readers say about UMM:

We love your beautiful and informative magazine.

We all have been waiting for the *Better Homes and Gardens* for mobilehome owners and you have done it. How do I subscribe?

CoMO-CAL has two different issues - Fall 2009 and Winter 2009. So specify which issue when ordering - or order both issues - twice as good!

**2009 BRAINSTORMING WORKSHOPS**

The two “brainstorming workshops” held in 2009 were successful bringing mobilehome owners together to discuss solutions to issues we face in our parks. We are grateful to those who participated and will continue hosting them in 2010.

Here are some of the brainstormed ideas:

- Educate, educate, educate
  - Legislate enforcement of the MRL
  - Vote out elected officials not for us
  - Align with other groups
  - Create a list of pro-bono attorneys
  - Work with local city councils
  - Form a homeowners group with dues
  - Document all violations in a park
  - Put everything in writing
  - Strength in numbers - pool resources
  - Help elect those public officials that support our rights and needs
  - Get neighbors involved
- Have a contact in every park to distribute information. Be active.
  - The need to organize is critical
  - Establish a task force to enforce the MRL
  - Bring issues to the masses through media - educate the public and elected officials
  - Share information
  - We must look out for each other

**LEGISLATION 2010 by Frank Wodley, CoMO-CAL President**

On December 14, 2009 I participated in a conference call with GSMOL lobbyists Brian Augusta and Christine Minnehan, GSMOL President Tim Sheahan, LAT Chairman Jim Burr, and GSMOL representatives around California. The issue was defeating AB761 (Calderon - eliminating vacancy control) in 2010.

Currently AB761 is in the Rules Committee, but it is expected to go to the Judiciary Committee early in 2010. Members of the Judiciary Committee include Senator Ellen Corbett (Chair)(D), Senator Tom Harman (Vice-Chair)(R), Senator Dean Florez(D), Senator Mark Leno(D), and Senator Mimi Walters(R). The contact information for the committee is (916)651-4113.

Defeating AB761 is critical. As in past years, CoMO-CAL will continue its grass roots efforts to defend mobilehome owner rights in Sacramento. We also realize that there are many other issues that need to be considered when helping mobilehome owners.

Although GSMOL’s agenda for 2010 does not include any new legislation. to help us with enforcement of the MRL, CoMO-CAL believes such legislation is critical and we will continue to promote it. Of course we refer to Washington States enforcement program which is now in its third year. Go to <http://www.atg.wa.gov/MHDR.aspx> to learn more about this program.

### The Blitz We Cannot Ignore by Bob Slagle

Greedy predators are methodically chipping away at our ability to survive as mobilehome residents. Consider the tenacious assaults in the courts and the incredible sums spent to influence state legislators in a well organized and heavily funded effort to attack our way of life.

Park owners, many of whom today are moguls and major corporations, have their hired guns going after even the most fundamental protections we have, from local rent stabilization ordinances, to forced condo conversions, to the current attempt to have the state declare non-HUD approved mobile homes "unsafe and unfit for in-place sale." This includes all mobile homes manufactured prior to 1976 could not be sold on their lot.

That chilling proposal sent a reminder of the dark days of yesteryear when community owners were allowed to block sales of homes older than 17 years of age. The Golden State Mobilehome Owners' League (GSMOL) fought to get protective laws passed in the early 1980s and as a result, homeowners in California continue to enjoy the right to sell their homes in place, so long as those homes meet the health and safety codes. But the threats continue.

Individual residents and their local organizations have little chance of defending their lifestyle against the threats. Local governments sometimes take up the battle, but not necessarily for the rights of park residents. Although, there may be some common interest at stake, bottom line, cities and counties are fighting for their special interests and we may be just friendly observers along for the ride. If it gets down to a negotiation between local government and the park owner's team of experts, our interests will not be fully represented at the table, unless we have hired legal counsel, and most local resident groups do not have the resources to hire competent representation on a

continuing basis.

What support do we have? CoMO-CAL and GSMOL are expressly committed to the protection of mobilehome residents.

They have limited paid help and are funded exclusively by membership dues and donations. As can be expected, it is rather expensive to provide capable and consistent legislative and legal counsel to combat the huge resources of the opposition. Without a healthy membership, our main source of resident support is placed at serious risk.

Unfortunately, all mobilehome park issues involve abstruse legal issues that are difficult for most residents to comprehend. They are at a loss to interpret how their lives might be affected by the threats.

Even if a resident family includes a son or daughter who is a successful attorney, they still need specialized expert representation in matters affecting their mobilehome lifestyle.

Be aware, well-meaning activists and hacks, like me, cannot fill the gap and replace reliable legal analysis and counsel. In fact, we can actually cause harm when residents rely on unprofessional and amateurish interpretations of complex legal issues and government codes.

The only way we can successfully fight the predators that are lavishly funded by park owners and deep-pocket investors, is to help the groups that rely on us exclusively for financial support and grass-roots involvement to protect our lifestyle and financial well-being. Residents should think about the savings in rental outlays and the many thousands of dollars at stake in preserving the equity in their homes. They should consider the stakes when asked to contribute a little time and effort and a few dollars to fight the battles – al-

**ATTORNEY JON HEIM ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS**

This is the first month we will be publishing this column, and intend to continue it through 2010. As you may know, Jon Heim is Novato attorney who has offered his services to CoMO-CAL at a reduced rate. When you sign up for “legal services,” Jon Heim is probably the person we will send you to.

Recently I had a chat with Mr. Heim about a few of my concerns:

**Question:** Can the park require a credit report from a prospective tenant (someone buying a home in the park)?

- Answer: A good argument can be made that the park CAN NOT require a credit report. The park can require verification of income however

**Question:** Is the park required to give each new resident a “Mobilehome Park Rental Agreement Disclosure Form?”

- Answer: YES! 798.75.5 of the MRL states The management shall provide a prospective homeowner with a completed written disclosure form concerning the park described in subdivision (b) at least three days prior to execution of a rental agreement or statement signed by the park management and the prospective homeowner that the parties have agreed to the terms and conditions of the rental agreement. The management shall update the information on the disclosure form annually, or, in the event of a material change in the condition of the mobilehome park, at the time of the material change in that condition.

Editor’s Note: It has been my experience that few if any parks follow 798.75.5. I myself have never received such a form nor have I received yearly updates, although there have been changes in my park.

most always for their personal benefit.

For years, many of us have taken their protection for granted, but now it is crunch time and we need to step up to the plate. The old stories do not hold up: “residents just cannot pay more,” “there’s too much apathy and complacency,” “folks don’t want to get involved,” and some fear intimidation and retaliation from park managers, and so on. In reality, there are few that can’t afford memberships and to give a \$5 bill for the legislative and legal funds and find a couple of additional members. And there may be more who can afford \$50 or \$100, or more, to help preserve their lifestyle.

Here at Palm Springs View Estates, where we do

not have a hired gun, we particularly need the legal expertise to protect our interests. We need to think *professional partnership* . . . partners we cannot afford to lose.

Renew your memberships, or join up now. Get your neighbors to understand how critical it is to keep our support groups alive and active.

-- Bob Slagle, Resident of Palm Springs View Estates (currently the subject of an appellate court case regarding a forced conversion).

Please refer to the PSVE Website at: <http://www.deserthomefront.com/>

### CoMO-CAL This and That

1. **THE VOICE by Email:** If you want a copy of THE VOICE by email, please send your request to [comocal@yahoo.com](mailto:comocal@yahoo.com) and we are happy to send it to you. As soon as we get more funds for some office help, we will resume sending THE VOICE by email to those members who have it.
2. **Questions for an Attorney:** Send us your legal questions and we will pick one. Answers will be published in future newsletters.
3. **Credit cards:** We want your feedback on this—would it be helpful if we accepted credit cards for renewals/donations, etc? Let us know.
4. **Window signs:** Would you put a CoMO-CAL window sign in your front window for neighbors to see? It is time for your neighbors and friends to know about us. We can also send you full color informational brochures to hand out. Let us know.
5. **Donations:** It really helps do more if you would include a small donation of \$5 or \$10 when you renew.
6. **Free Membership:** We continue our program of a 3 month trial for free. Also those folks who can not afford the \$20/year for a membership—send in what you can! Our goal is to keep everyone informed.
7. **Membership Guarantee:** We continue to guarantee your membership with a 90 day guarantee. If for any reason you are not satisfied, we will happily give you back your membership dues. New members only.
8. **Legal Services:** Many of you know we offer reduced rate legal services to our members who pay an additional annual fee. This fee will increase effective January 1, 2010 from \$15 per year to \$25 per year. Those who have already paid this fee will of course be covered. Reduced fee services include a letter, written by our attorney, for a charge of \$135, a legal question answered for \$35, or a 30 minute consultation with our attorney at no charge. To qualify, you must be a member of CoMO-CAL and have paid the legal fee 120 days prior to using the service, i.e. you can't just join and use it immediately, i.e. it works like insurance.
9. **THE VOICE ONLY:** CoMO-CAL offers THE VOICE, our bi-monthly newsletter. This fee will go to \$12/year effective January 1, 2010 and will be available to members and non-members alike. So if you can not afford a full membership, at least get THE VOICE and be informed.
10. **Other Advocacy Groups Raising Fees:** MOHOC and GSMOL are raising their fees by \$5.00/year to \$15 and \$25 respectively. You may remember MOHOC primarily function is to provide attorney consultation to its membership, but has no newsletter.

### \$4,000 DONATION from HOA to CoMO-CAL

CoMO-CAL is thrilled to announce the receipt of a \$4,000 donation from a HOA just before Christmas. The HOA wanted anonymity because of their high-profile park owner. We say to them, thanks so much for believing in us and what we do. We will do much with this donation and may

be able to hire part time office help in 2010 and/or reach many more folks. We hope this sets an example for others to follow - believe in us and what we do. We are here for all mobilehome owners in California. Thanks so much!!

**COUPON FOR CoMO-CAL MEMBERSHIP (New Members Only)**

This coupon entitles the bearer to a free membership in CoMO-CAL for a period of three months. CoMO-CAL is the fastest growing advocate for owners of mobilehomes in California. We offer reduced rate legal services, a bi-monthly newsletter “THE VOICE,” an alerts network, a message board, and much more. Our goals are UNITY, COMMUNCIATON and EDUCATION.

Annual membership is \$20. Legal services is \$25.

To use, simply cut this out and send it with your mailing address, phone number and park name to CoMO-CAL, P.O. Box 4821, Chatsworth, Ca. 91311

**CoMO-CAL**

**(COALITION OF MOBILEHOME OWNERS-CALIFORNIA)**

P.O. Box 4821, Chatsworth, Ca 91313-4821.

**NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (Print Please)**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

PARK NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SPACE #: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANTS PHONE NUMBER (\_\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Money Order ( ) Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: Amount: \$5.00 ( ) \$10.00 ( ), \$25.00 ( ), Other Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP (\$20.00/12 Months, \$38.00/(24 Months), \$54 (36 Months) 90 day full refund guarantee

LEGAL SERVICES \$25/12 months, THE VOICE ONLY \$12/12 months

PLEASE INCLUDE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO “CoMO-CAL” & THANK YOU

MAIL TO: **CoMO-CAL, P.O. BOX 4821, CHATSWORTH, CA. 91313-4821**

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CoMO-CAL is a non-profit California Corporation dedicated to serving mobilehome owners in California. Our purpose is to educate, communicate and unite. We are MAKING A DIFFERENCE!



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#### SERVICES WE PROVIDE OUR MEMBERS

1. 6 issues of THE VOICE. Usually 20 pages long, filled with important information no mobilehome owner should be without. Articles from around the state of California. Tips and Suggestions. Important laws explained so you can understand how you are protected.
2. Website: **comocal.org**. Members have access to all issues of THE VOICE, attorneys who know the MRL, important links to government, advocacy groups, etc.
3. Small Claims Court Assistance: We will pay your fees up to \$30.00 and help with your paperwork. (Some restrictions apply.)
4. Questions / Problems: Our staff is ready to take your call to advise you regarding questions and problems you might have.
5. We have several attorneys we refer members for help with litigation or advice. Unfortunately your dime.
6. Above all, a way to UNITE and have a VOICE.