New California Salary History Law

With the passage of AB 168 into law, California joins Delaware, Oregon, Massachusetts, and New York along with the city of San Francisco prohibiting employers from asking about a job applicant’s salary history when deciding to offer a job or how much to pay. The new law applies to all employers, including state and local government, and will take effect January 1, 2018.

Any employer who interviews applicants for a job must be mindful of the fact that they cannot ask or “fish for” an applicant’s salary history. Employers can still ask how much an applicant expects to be paid. This will provide a sense of applicants’ salary expectations without violating this new law.

New Board, No Ballot

The Nominating Committee, comprised of President Figone and Sil Addiego, delivered their report at the November business meeting. Four out of the nine elected seats on our Board of Directors are to be filled. With no additional nominees, there is no need for a secret ballot vote.

The 2018-19 directors (a two year term) are listed below. Terms are effective January 16, 2018.

- Sil Addiego Coldwell Banker Bartels
- Fred Fassett Minuteman Press
- Dominic Tang Marvin Gardens Real Estate
- Jeffrey Wright Wright Realtors

Meet these directors on page 6.

Minimum Wage Up

Effective January 1, 2018, the minimum wage for all workers within the city of El Cerrito will be $13.60 per hour. Employers are required to post the official El Cerrito Wage Bulletin at work sites. Said document is available from the City of El Cerrito or the Chamber.

On January 1, 2019, the minimum wage will become $15 per hour. For more information contact the City of El Cerrito at (510) 215-4318 or email wages@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.
Welcome to New Member Sasa Kitchen

Co-owners Cinda Ma and Teresa Ho accept a member plaque from Chamber manager Lisa Martinengo. The restaurant at 10350 San Pablo Avenue opened in September.

Business about town. Dentists of El Cerrito Plaza, a Chamber member, will open soon in the space formerly occupied by the Avenue clothing store, next to See’s Candy. Construction work is well underway.

Contractors are busy inside the former Safeway building at Moeser Lane and that’s a positive sign that next spring we could see a 24-Hour Fitness open for business. The application to the city was submitted in May.

The 514 Lounge, on San Pablo just south of Potrero, still advertises “coming soon” and the eager-to-open owner says the wait is for “permitting.” Meanwhile, rent on the space gets paid every month, so you better have some deep pockets to wade through the “system” when opening a bar or restaurant. I hope the plan doesn’t end up like Mama’s Suga Shack! It seems to me there ought to be a way to speed up the process. However, in no way should inspections be compromised as we all want clean, safe, eating and drinking places. What to do?

Mechanics Bank, at Fairmount and San Pablo, is in the midst of a major remodel inside the branch.

Strong coffee, good food. That’s the Cafe N’lne slogan, a new Chamber member, at Bank of the West Plaza, 11100 San Pablo Avenue. (Sriracha Tuna sandwich has some kick.) An espresso machine is now up and running. (That is not a typo in N’lne.)

New eat in town. It’s JunkCat! An El Cerrito business, JunkCat hauls almost anything. This Chamber recently hired the firm to clean and haul trash away from the parking area behind our building. The crew showed up on time, and did a superb job and at a very reasonable price. Special note: they properly dispose of trash unlike some of the fly-by-night folks that hang out by a major local chain store. I give JunkCat two dew claws up! JunkCat.com on the Web, or call (510) 815-3216.

Sandi Genser-Maack. Sad news just in as I write this column learning of the passing of a most active Richmond resident and well known to many El Cerritans too. Sandi was very much interested in local history and, in particular, TEPCO, the one time El Cerrito manufacturer of chinaware. She and husband Lynn attended several of our recent city centennial events.

Donations in Sandi’s memory can be made to the Richmond Museum Association, P.O. Box 1267, Richmond, CA 94802.

CR 217 The City Council is moving ahead to change El Cerrito from a general law city to a charter city. The purpose: to raise more tax revenue. There are many big buck items on the city’s wish list including the $30 million new library that was narrowly defeated by voters. Is there a spending problem here? El Cerrito voters have always been very generous when city government asked for tax increases so I am not seeing a need for the switch to charter city status just to raise more revenue. Maybe I don’t see the big picture.

The charter city idea was kicked around five or six years ago by then-Mayor Bill Jones and I cannot recall where that effort actually went. But here is what I see happening now, based on past experiences. The council receives a study and decides to place the question on the ballot. City administration speed dials Lew Edwards Group to create a campaign to pass the measure using the usual threats about losing public safety services. Carefully worded surveys and opinion polls ask local voters questions created to elicit specific answers in support of the campaign. Then we vote. (Oh cynical me.) If there is another reason for charter city status other than easier tax increases I like to hear it. Even with status quo local voters only want the truth. If the city is honest with voters then the voters will vote accordingly. Just my opinion.

Crab is back! Delicious too, from what I hear. So that means several crab feeds will pop up on the calendar. City of El Cerrito Recreation & Park will hold theirs on Saturday, January 27th, with crab, salad, pasta, dessert, and plenty of great raffle prizes. $50; tickets at the Community Center. I’ll see you there.

Plus this: the EC Police Employees Association has a crab feed planned for February 17th. The PEA had to scrap the event last year due to the crab fiasco. I’m delighted it’s coming back.

BYLINE

December 2017
December is Always a Mixed Bag

I’d like to start off by warmly inviting all Byline readers to our special Holiday Lunch and Fundraiser coming up soon on 12/12 at 12! That’s Tuesday, December 12, at 12 noon, at our city’s newest restaurant: Los Moles. We’d like very much to see you there! An advance ticket is necessary; please check our website for more information on how to pay. Come enjoy a couple hours of rubbing elbows with fellow community and business members over a scrumptious lunch, buy some raffle tickets to help raise funds for the Chamber’s work to continue. We have recently filled our Board of Directors seats with some new faces and ideas to work and support our local businesses going forward into 2018.

Speaking of the new year, I’m excited to give advance notice of our first guest speaker of the year, our district member from the State Board of Equalization, Fiona Ma, CPA. The BOE touches so many aspects of business in El Cerrito, this will be an event not to miss. We’re planning for a lunchtime event in January, more details to be announced soon.

This has been an exciting year, both for the Chamber and for El Cerrito. The city turned 100 years old and honored the milestone with many wonderful events and activities. Last February, the Chamber and Historical Society collaborated to produce a nostalgic evening of past business leaders reminiscing on earlier decades in El Cerrito. This year also brought news that the building we called home for five years was sold and will soon be demolished. Our office situation is currently being addressed, so I have faith that the Chamber will get a new home soon.

2017 has also brought a big flurry of new building development projects to our city, which are in various stages of progress. Like most things in life, there are pros and cons attached to these developments. City staff has maintained that increasing the housing stock will entice new businesses to come set up shop here. We cannot just sit around and hope this comes true. I invite all Byline readers to attend Chamber events. Come brainstorm with us for ideas and incentives to attract and keep vibrant local businesses in our city limits. I hope you will agree that El Cerrito’s quality of life is certainly enhanced with a healthy selection of small businesses.

Happy holiday wishes to everyone and keep shopping local whenever possible!

The views expressed here are mine and do not necessarily represent those of the Chamber Board. Email: l.martinengo@elcerritochamber.org, cell: (510) 778-5883.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Continued from page 1

in strongly and make a priority in my purchasing decisions. But I must admit, when it comes to dealing with traffic here in the Bay Area, I for one, prefer that UPS, FedEx and the USPS do the driving rather than me.

In the spirit of shopping local and supporting small businesses, several new businesses have located in El Cerrito and new commercial spaces are soon to be considered by the city as a part of new development projects. Mr. Pickles has applied to locate in the Village at Town Center, Nori Sushi has recently received its certificate of occupancy at 10178 San Pablo in the Peppermint Tree Plaza, Cigar Box Kitchen will soon open also in the space of the former Raphael’s Shutter Cafe, Café Nhè has opened in the site of the former Franco’s Mini Deli, and MOD Pizza recently opened at the El Cerrito Plaza. Additionally, there are commercial spaces being provided as a part of new development being considered by the city soon at 10135, 11645 and 10963 San Pablo Avenue. The Chamber looks forward to many of these new businesses becoming Chamber members. Information about the proposed developments can be found at the city’s website: www.elcerrito.org/MajorProjects.

In other news, El Cerrito is requesting help in deciding the future of parks and recreation in town. The city is currently undertaking a Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan and wants to hear from residents. An online survey and forum are available, along with other information about the plan; find it at www.elcerrito.org/ParksMP. The next community meeting is Thursday, January 18, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Community Center.

In case you haven’t heard, there are two other events worth mentioning. First, there will be a holiday pancake breakfast on Saturday, December 9, 2017, from 9-11 a.m. at the El Cerrito Community Center. Second, the Recreation Department’s annual crab feed will be on Saturday, January 27, 2018, at 6 p.m., also at the El Cerrito Community Center.

I’m happy to announce that our nominating committee was successful in finding three new enthusiastic volunteers to join our Board of Directors for the 2018-2019 term. I’d like to acknowledge and thank each one of them personally. They are Fred Fassett with Minuteman Press of Berkeley, Nic Tang with Marvin Gardens Real Estate, and Jeff Wright with Wright Realtors. In addition, Sil Addiego, longtime local Realtor, has agreed to continue as a board member as well. That makes four individuals to fill the four seats up for consideration for the coming year. As such, there will be no formal ballot process this year and these four individuals will formally join our board at the January lunch meeting. Thanks again to each of them.

I trust you are all planning to attend our annual holiday celebration at Los Moles on December 12th. If you are planning to attend, please register online at www.elcerritochamber.org. Also, please bring a toy as once again we are making this event an opportunity to join the El Cerrito Fire Department and the United States Marine Corps in supporting “Toys For Tots.”

In closing, I’d like to remind everyone in their quest for stuff this holiday season that ultimately it’s all just stuff. Try not to lose focus on what matters most, the spirit of the holiday season. I wish you all the best, now and in the new year.
Our member profile this month is on one of the oldest businesses still operating in El Cerrito today, Granter’s Jewelry & Loan, at 10056 San Pablo Avenue. Next year, Granter’s will celebrate 75 years of continually serving El Cerrito and the local community.

The pawn business wasn’t always seen in a good light, and fortunately, this started to change for the better about 10 years ago, partially because pawn shop owners started to regulate themselves to establish more standard and transparent procedures. This shift toward legitimacy was helped along by the big banking debacles of the last decade. Some banks are no longer the trustworthy and helpful institutions they once were. In fact, many people who are turned down by banks, are able to come to a pawn shop and drop off some valuable but otherwise non-essential item to get quick cash for paying bills, buying critical items, etc., with no need for a credit check. The only requirement is to be over 18 years of age and possess identification in the form of a valid California driver’s license or passport.

Granter’s is the epitome of a “green” business particularly when it comes to fine jewelry. Instead of buying a new piece of jewelry at an overinflated price from a generic jewelry store at the mall, why not give new life to an older piece where you’ll get an elegant engagement ring or a lovely necklace made back in the time when craftsmanship and materials were much better? Granter’s employs a full time jewelry repairer and restorer to ensure their vintage pieces are in top condition. They’re able to sell them at half the appraised retail value, so it’s really the best deal for everyone.

Vito Wise and his extended family have owned and operated Granter’s since the late ’80s, though his family roots have been in El Cerrito for many decades. His father once owned a bar called The Happy Hour, next to the famous It Club. His uncle Ralph was the face of Granter’s for many years and Vito virtually grew up in the store. More colorful history notes can be found on their website: www.granterspawn.com.

Vito, also known to some as Tony, expressed how much fun the pawn business is now, partly because the public perception has changed for the better, but also because he’s able to give nuggets of financial planning wisdom to young people who come in the doors. They think their snazzy electronic device should be worth a lot of money, when in reality, the value drops very fast. Instead, Vito explains about the enduring value of gold and silver and sells them silver rounds so they’ll have something lasting of value. He’s also been known to give away dolls and trinkets to every child who comes in, as the previous owner, Stan Mora, did.

Located next to our iconic Cerrito Theater, Granter’s is open daily except Sunday. Stop by and visit the friendly staff and browse the collection of vintage jewelry and other unique items. You’ll be glad you visited a real El Cerrito treasure trove!
State Attorney General Xavier Becerra joined a bipartisan coalition of 36 attorneys general in filing an amicus brief to urge the U.S. Supreme Court to grant review and reconsider the Court’s outdated “physical presence” rule, which restricts states’ ability to collect certain taxes from out-of-state retailers. In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in National Bellas Hess v. Department of Revenue that states were prohibited from requiring out-of-state retailers to collect sales and use taxes on goods purchased through the mail. With the rise of online shopping, out-of-state retailers—including online retailers—have used the physical presence rule set forth in Bellas Hess, and later reaffirmed in the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1992 ruling in Quill Corp. v. North Dakota, to avoid collecting sales and use taxes.

“Our small businesses and local retailers are the backbone of our economy,” said Nicolas Maduros, Director of the California Department of Tax and Revenue Administration. “It’s unfair to both in-state retailers and to all California taxpayers.”

South Dakota recently enacted a statute requiring online retailers to collect South Dakota sales taxes. On September 14, 2017, the South Dakota Supreme Court held South Dakota’s statute unconstitutional because only the U.S. Supreme Court can reconsider its own precedents. South Dakota filed a petition for writ of certiorari asking the U.S. Supreme Court to revisit the matter. Attorney General Becerra is supporting South Dakota’s effort.


A copy of the brief can be found at oag.ca.gov/news.

Brace+Bolt Returns

The Earthquake Brace+Bolt (EBB) program is coming back to El Cerrito in January 2018. Qualifying homeowners will have the opportunity to protect their homes from earthquake damage by participating in the EBB Program, which offers up to $3,000 toward a code-compliant seismic retrofit for qualifying houses.

EBB is a state-supported program that offers homeowners funding for a specific code-compliant seismic retrofit to ensure the work is done right. Historically, retrofits were often incomplete and not based on a uniform best-practice building code.

“Our mission is to help make older homes safer,” said Janiele Maffei, Chief Mitigation Officer of CEA and Executive Director of EBB. “Homes that lack anchor bolts and cripple wall bracing can come off their foundation in an earthquake, causing dangerous and expensive damage. We have seen homes like this take up to two years to repair at great cost.”

Registration for EBB will be open January 23 through February 23, 2018. See EarthquakeBolt.com on the Web for more information, including how to apply, which homes qualify and finding a licensed contractor, or contact the City of El Cerrito.

AG: Tax Out-Of-State and Online Retailers

Gannon Abbey, owner, accepts a new member plaque from President Mark Figone. The business is located at the Bank of the West Plaza at 11100 San Pablo Avenue and open Monday through Friday.
Meet Your 2018-2019 Board Members

Time and space permitting, the Byline may interview the five other members of the Board at a future time.

Sil Addiego

A 62-year resident of El Cerrito, Sil attended local schools, and San Francisco State University before becoming a Realtor. He has been in that profession for over a half century. The most senior member of our Board of Directors, Sil has served since 1982. In 1984 he was President of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. Sil is also an active member of the El Cerrito Rotary Club.

Fred Fassett

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Fred is a lifelong photographer and printer, getting his career started at the young age of 10 by running a neighborhood newspaper. Higher education included the Rhode Island School of Design (Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with emphasis in photography and an advanced degree as a Bachelor of Architecture). At RISD he acquired the name Multi Fassett.

Moving to Berkeley he founded Captain Copy in 1972. In 1984 he operated General Printing and in 2008 Minuteman Press of Berkeley was acquired. Fred is active with the Berkeley Rotary Club, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, and the Berkeley Breakfast Club.

Nic Tang

Dominic “Nic” Tang was born and raised in Hong Kong, and has been living in the East Bay for the last 26 years, and working as a real estate agent with Marvin Gardens.

With an in-depth knowledge of the local markets, customs, trends, Nic works with investors through the buying and selling process with energetic and methodical approach. Nic provides a wealth of experience, knowledge which brings value to every transaction he is involved in. He takes pride in taking care of clients, share knowledge, follow through to navigate, which often earn him repeated referrals.

Nic spends much of his time with his son, Justin, with many outdoor activities including hiking and camping. Nic also enjoys listening to music including classical music.

Jeffrey Wright

A native of Richmond and a resident of El Cerrito for 30 years, he has been licensed by the California Bureau of Real Estate since 1979. He is a 1983 graduate of San Francisco State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a specialization in Real Estate.

Jeff has served as the President of the West Contra Costa Association of Realtors as well as on the Executive Committee and board of directors of the California Association of Realtors. In El Cerrito he and his son were active in Scouting as well as Little League Baseball. Jeff is currently serving as a member of the Contra Costa County Planning Commission, President of the Richmond Museum Association, and as a board member of For Richmond. He and his wife, Tyra, are the parents of a son who attends Contra Costa College and a daughter who attends the University of California at Berkeley.
The most recent El Cerrito Marketing Program postcards were mailed to 13,378 addresses just before Thanksgiving. That includes all of El Cerrito and a portion of Richmond Annex.

The next ECMP postcard will have a deadline of February 16, 2018. For information about the program or to participate, email Lisa Martinengo, Chamber Manager: ads@elcerritochamber.org
PREVIEW
At the January 16, 2018 luncheon meeting, Fiona Ma, CPA, from the Board of Equalization will be present to talk about Sales Tax.
More information in the January Byline.

The Calendar

Dec 7 Board of Directors meets, 8:30 a.m. Chamber office.
7 Cerrito Classics: “A Christmas Story” (1983) at the Rialto Cinemas Cerrito, 7 p.m.
(Don’t shoot your eye out, kid.)
9 Pancake breakfast, 9-11 a.m., Community Center.
10 Shadi display opens on Moeser Lane.
12 Holiday party at Los Moles. See front page.
14-17 “All is Calm.” Contra Costa Civic Theatre. ccct.org
19 City Council meets, 7 p.m., City Hall.
Jan 4 Board of Directors meets, 8:30 a.m.
Location to be announced.
16 Chamber luncheon and annual installation at noon.
El Cerrito Royale, 6510 Gladys Ave., El Cerrito.
RSVP please. More information to come.

Farmers Market Holiday Schedule
Normally open on Tuesdays and Fridays all year. However, this month please note the schedule changes over the Christmas weekend.

| Closed | Saturday, December 23 |
| Closed | Tuesday, December 26 |
| Open   | Saturday, December 30 |

Farmers Market
AT EL CERRITO PLAZA
Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A complete directory of Chamber members can be printed from the website: www.elcerritochamber.org