

LVT candidates in the United States

by Mike O'Mara, Baltimore, MD

There are two candidates running for office this year in the U.S. who strongly support shifting taxes to land. One is running for City Council in Baltimore, Maryland, and the other is running for Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, Virginia.

If Henry George were still around now, he would probably run for office again, and would encourage others to do so, as one of the strategies for promoting land justice and good economics. In that same tradition, the following two candidates are running for office this year:

1) Lorenzo Gaztanaga - running for City Council in Baltimore, Maryland. (Lorenzo spoke at the Gaithersburg, Maryland geonomic conference this summer, and attended the rest of the conference and the dinner afterwards. He is a member of the Thomas Paine Network, which promotes geonomic views.)

Here is what his campaign literature says:

"Property owners should not be charged more for improving their property - this discourages owners from keeping their property up, particularly owners of rental units. Basing the property tax exclusively on site value would make more money available to individuals and communities, which they could use to provide needed services based on competition not monopoly."

Also, his website says:

"A property tax based on land value rather than structures and improvements would be a positive incentive for property owners that live on their property, as well as those who rent, to make it livable and viable on the market." The website for Lorenzo Gaztanaga is: www.md.lp.org/gaztanaga.html. The telephone number for more information is 410-526-7870, and the address is: MIFBAC (Gaztanaga), 8201 Laurel-Bowie Rd, Bowie, MD 20715.

2) Paul Gagnon - running for Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, Virginia. (Gagnon is on the Board of Trustees of the Henry George Foundation of America, and is also

a member of the Thomas Paine Network, mentioned above.)

Here is what his website says:

"There should be a dual-rate real estate tax and I intend to propose it. My plan is simple. It calls for taxing buildings at a lower rate than land. It's a concept borrowed from over 700 communities around the world and it isn't considered utopian or radical or unattainable by any of them.

"The upshot of this would be that the average taxpayer would get a whopping tax break and the big developer "we gotta raise taxes" crowd will get their chance to donate more to the public coffers. If indeed we "gotta raise taxes" then let's raise them in proportion to the use of the land by the owners of that land."

Paul Gagnon's website is: <www.freefairfax.com>, and his address is: Paul E. Gagnon, 7011-A Manchester Blvd, Suite 1776, Fairfax, VA 22310.

Both Lorenzo Gaztanaga and Paul Gagnon decided to run as third party candidates, with the Libertarian Party. They are both active members of the Thomas Paine Network, which was founded by people from several political parties, including the Democratic Party, Reform Party, and Libertarian Party, and which does outreach to people from all political parties.

Gaztanaga and Gagnon have both run for office before, and are active in their communities. It's hard to predict what their chances are of winning this year, but regardless of the outcome, each of them is getting out an important message to voters, and each will be receiving media coverage, including their write-ups in the voter's guides.

I've volunteered to provide a clearinghouse for information about any pro-land value tax candidates in the U.S. So, if anyone knows of other such candidates in upcoming elections, feel free to contact me at: Mike O'Mara romike@crosslink.net, or PO Box 21015, Baltimore, MD 21228.

(Editor's note: For related articles on Mike O'Mara's political activities, see GroundSwell issues: July-Aug. 1996, "Progress made at Libertarian convention," and May-June 1998, "Land tax political candidates.")