NCSL NEEDS US AND WANTS US
by Al Katzenberger, St. Louis, MO

The 2004 annual conference of the National Conference of State Legislatures was held in Salt Lake City, Utah. The conference was July 19 to 23, 2004, and was well attended. Attendance at the conference is reported at their website, www.ncsl.org.

Fellow PREC member Al Lubin of St. Louis attended the board meeting of Common Ground-USA and the annual conference of the Council of Georgist Organizations in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Wendell Fitzgerald and David Giesen from the Henry George School in San Francisco again volunteered to help man the exhibition booth at NCSL. The Salt Palace Convention Center was a wonderful place to hold the annual NCSL conference for a low budget organization like Public Revenue Education Council (PREC). We had no trouble getting boxes of display materials into the convention center and parking was only $5.00 per day. The other break we received was finding a clean and inexpensive Howard Johnson Motel two blocks from the convention center. We did have some bad news. PREC usually just rents an eight-foot table and one chair to furnish the exhibition booth. This time on the first day the exhibits opened we found a nasty gram in our booth saying carpeting was required. Carpet was laid in our booth and we were expected to pay a premium for the carpet because we didn’t order it during the discount period. The table and chair cost $103.93. The 9’x10’ carpet cost $175.89. Again, I had to remind the exhibitor service that PREC is a poor nonprofit organization and cannot afford to rent such an expensive carpet and that requiring carpet was new at the conference this year. The carpet cost us up bringing $275.89. Bad news for next year is that we are going to be required also to have a fireproof draped table. The drape will add about $100.00 more to PREC’s cost. Dear Fellow Georgists, it would be very helpful for you to financially help PREC pay for the exhibition booth. The space has to be rented. The rent this year was $875.00. We need printed materials to give to people stopping at our booth. And visual eye-catching signs and other displays are necessary to quickly get attention of the people we are attracting to our booth. Please help.

This year we again passed out the publication “Synopsis of Henry George’s Progress and Poverty”, for which the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation funded printing, and we also distributed Dr. Robert Andelson’s booklet, “Henry George and the Reconstruction of Capitalism.” The Center for the Study of Economics supplied the booklet, “44 Objections and Responses” by Steven Cord. Common Ground-USA sent a copy of the legislative brochure, “The Revenue Source Is Under Our Feet” (copy inserted in this GroundSwell issue), Internet Cards titled “World Wide Web of Georgist Home Pages” and Common Ground-USA membership brochures. We had some materials in Spanish. Gilbert Halverson’s “Bibliography of Two Rate Property Tax, Land Value Taxation or Site Valuation” was also available.

Now, some great news. The NCSL has responded to our request to have a workshop at the 2005 conference in Seattle, Washington. Bert Waisanen, Senior Policy Specialist Fiscal Affairs, and Michael Bird, Senior Federal Affairs Counsel, both took a sample of all the materials that we had on the booth table. They both requested that we send them a workshop proposal concerning site-value for the 2005 conference. PREC is not up to doing a workshop for the state legislators and the various legislative staff. We know there are Georgists who are skilled at doing such workshops. Please contact NCSL. Start at www.ncsl.org and call Mr. Waisanen at 303-364-7700 (Denver) and/or Mr. Bird at 202-624-4686 (DC).

If you live in the Seattle area and have time to work the exhibition booth August 15 to 19, 2005, at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, please call Al Katzenberger on weekends at 1-314-704-1423 (cell). The PREC booth was near the main entrance. PREC has moved way up on the pecking-order for selecting the location of the booth. PREC started at above #400 and had no choice; we took what we were assigned, a very bad location near the food service, and no one would pack up our materials because they had cups and plates in their hands. This year we were #66 and secured a booth near the main entrance for the 2005 conference. Next year we are hoping to be below #50 in the pecking-order.

We had the usual run of materials in the booth. We are running short on all of the materials that we distribute. Because of term limits we are seeing a lot of new faces at the booth. We had only a few Spanish speakers this year. We expected more being out West. The theme of the conference was “The New Legislative Reality.” That was an appropriate opening for Wendell Fitzgerald to get people to stop at our booth. Wendell would yell out, “Come on over and let’s talk about taxes.” (continued on pg. 3)