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 ended up costing $120.89. 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 supply 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 Waisanan, 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. Waisanan at 303-364-7700 (Denver) or Mr. Bird at 202-624-8686 (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 pick 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)
People would smile and groan. Wendell would just smile and signal for them to come to the booth. Wendell is so engaging that many would stop and talk with him. It was noticed that the women really paid close attention to him and maybe to what he was saying.

David Giesen is a joy to work with in the booth. He is especially good at attracting children and teenagers. David had a set of boxes labeled "Property Tax, Capital Gains Tax, Income Tax, Sales Tax, Business Tax and Bonds" on one side and on the back side labeled "Schools, Police Protection, Fire Protection, Public Health Services, Public Transportation and Higher Education." He asked people, "Would your property value go down if you didn't have Police Protection?" They would say, "Yes." Then he would ask the same question about the other public services. Then he would turn all the boxes around and ask, "Which tax should you pay for the public services that increased your property values?" For many the lights came on in their heads and they agreed with his presentation. Some would say Income Taxes. David would ask them, "Why do you want to punish yourself? Police Protection is not increasing your salary, what you are working for to pay for your house which you agreed would lose value without Police Protection." (continued on pg. 10)

I spoke to legislators about giving site-value a chance in their state. I told them to go slow and not to try to cause a revolution. I told them if they want a revolution to talk with Wendell and David. They saw that Wendell and David were ready to give them the revolutionary approach to the fairness of site-value.

Salt Lake City is the ketchup capital of the world. Residents consume 40 million ounces each year. Utah is the most Republican state in the U.S., and asked why they are supporting Senator John Kerry for President, they just look blank until you mention Kerry's connection to the Heinz Ketchup Company. They eat a pink French fry dip that looks and tasted like ketchup mixed with tartar sauce. They eat a cup full with a small order of fries.

The Federal Government owns 64% of Utah's land and the State owns another 10%.

We were invited to a welcome reception at the Utah State Capitol. We were given a tour of the building by a Mormon priest. When he explained that there are three levels of heaven and that David Giesen, Wendell Fitzgerald, and I were "Gods", and that we were all going to be saved, David and Wendell could not contain themselves and the priest revealed many aspects of the Mormon faith, and that he was wearing his priestly garment under his street clothing.

We were invited to see the Mormon Tabernacle Choir perform. I was definitely impressed by the choir's singing. Over at Temple Square there are young missionaries explaining the various teachings of the prophets. They do not want to be called "Tour Guides." They will remind you that they are missionaries. We were warned by strangers not to sign anything at Temple Square if we do not want missionaries on our doorsteps when we return home. The young missionaries are from around the globe and they wear a small flag showing what country they are from. They all told me they are enjoying their stay in the United States and want to return if and when they get a chance.

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