

## Booth at National Conference of State Legislatures hosted by P.R.E.C.

by Al Katzenberger, St. Louis, MO

Public Revenue Education Council (P.R.E.C.) with the support of Common Ground-USA had an exhibit booth at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures in St. Louis on July 28, 29, and 30, 1996.

More than 6,000 people attended the conference, including about 1,100 state legislators and twice as many state legislative staff personnel. The rest were other state officials who worked in administrative offices. There were representatives present from the Department of Revenue, Treasury, and Economic Development. There were fifteen foreign countries represented, mostly from the Organization of American States. Several of the delegates had their spouses with them, however, but very few children were observed in the exhibit area.

The conference is used by the state legislatures to exchange ideas and to learn what is and is not working in other areas of the country. Approximately half of the exhibitors were only interested in selling the states various products and services. The others were concerned with legislative issues from the very liberal social issues to the very conservative.

Our booth was very basic. We made an issue of the barrenness of our booth and several delegates were impressed. We told them we were selling a wonderful concept to help their constituents. Some asked us where we received our support, and when we informed them we were volunteers that really helped to get their attention.

The best thing we did to attract people was to display five signs that all said "BEST WAY TO PAY FOR GOVERNMENT".

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We had two pinned to the exhibit curtains, one on the table and two on easels on both ends of our table. Phil Cotton had these simple signs made at Kinkos. They were a big attraction to our booth. We would say to people as they passed, "We see you are curious, now come and get the answer," or "We want to help you be a better legislator." If we saw they came from states with large cities, we would say, "You don't have slums in New York" (most would answer, we do.) We would then quickly respond with, "Here is some information on how they were created and how to get rid of most of them." We handed out about 1,200 sets of information and an additional 500 of the Andelson speech.

We gave everyone we could a Common Ground-USA membership application, a synopsis of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" and a copy of the Common

Ground-USA pamphlet titled, "The Revenue Source Is Under Our Feet!" We also gave all state legislators and other key delegates a copy of "Henry George and the Reconstruction of Capitalism" by Dr. Robert V. Andelson. The Public Revenue Education Council is very proud of producing the Andelson speech in a very handsome booklet form. Strategically located on our table was a bowl of mints. This was very popular because of our location near an eating area; we could ask people if they wanted an after lunch mint and then hand them our material.

We made a special effort to stop every Missouri state legislative employer we could. There were about 200 at the conference, and they were all wearing orange T-shirts. We spoke to and gave our materials to at least half of these employees. Our booth was behind the Philadelphia booth. Their T-shirts were blue. We explained we were promoting Philadelphia because Henry George was born there. They took our set of information. About five people from Philadelphia had heard of Henry George. There were about 25 exhibitors from Philadelphia.

We learned that the way the information is handed to the delegates is very important. The person always scanned the top piece of literature. When we were able to show people the

mention of their state in the Common Ground-USA booklet, it was considerably easier to give them our materials. Several delegates asked us about our E-Mail address. We did not have this on a business card, but we did show them the E-Mail listings in the Common Ground-USA booklet.

Everyone seemed to understand the concept of site value when related to a parking meter. They understood that some parking meter locations cost more than others and that it doesn't

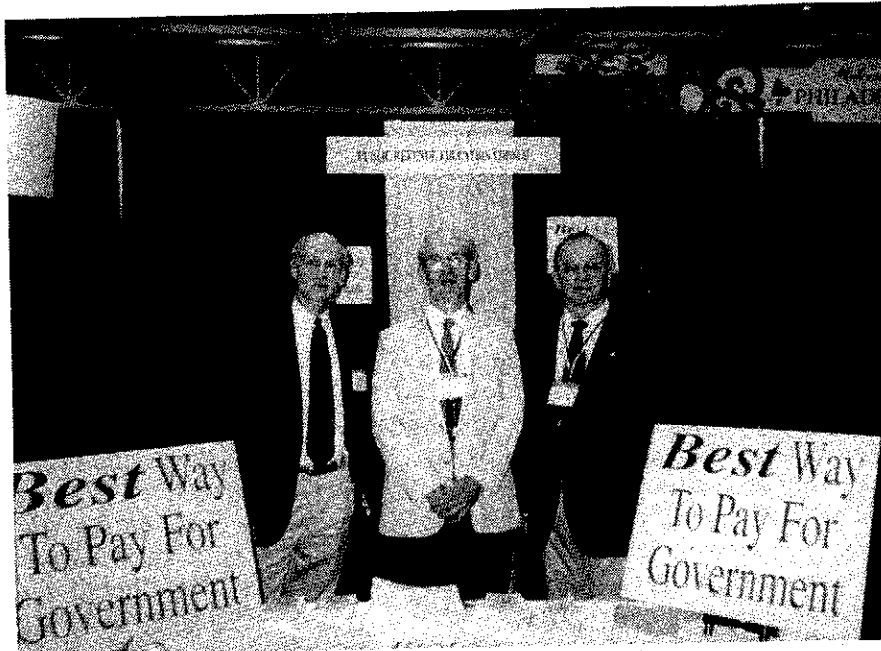
matter what price car is parked in the space. Most people understand the unfairness of people having to pay more for taking care of their property while at the same time some people could pay less because they neglect to take care of their property.

Some good contacts with other agencies were made, including the

2000 Census Redistricting Data Office in Washington, D.C. Katzenberger mentioned to Susan Knight the previous efforts of Common Ground-USA to get all 50 states (30 don't) to report to the Census of Governments the total state land values and total state building values separately, instead of one combined total. He referred to his 1991 letter to U.S. Rep. William Clay (D-MO), (Chairman of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and its subcommittee on the Census and Population.) He also referred to previous correspondence by Nadine Stoner to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs (Senator John Glenn (D-OH), Chairman, and Senator Herbert Kohl (D-WI), member, whose oversight includes the census.)

Later, another useful contact was made with the Widmeyer Baker Group of Washington, D.C. They have a contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Local H.U.D. offices receive raw data, and then send it to Widmeyer Baker for processing into various computer charts/graphics. They were particularly interested in hearing from Katzenberger about Matt Harris' three-dimensional depiction of land values in central city land in Austin, Texas.

There were some negatives. The words, "Lower Taxes to



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the Ground," were perceived as a tax protest slogan. At least six people thought we were protesting higher taxes and wanted to reduce taxes to the ground. We did not have any materials written in Spanish. The spouse of one of the foreign delegates said it was difficult to translate our materials and that it was an insult to the foreign delegates that we did not have at least some of our information in Spanish. When we tried to explain that this was our first time at the conference, she quickly complained about the conference organizers. We told her we would be ready for the Spanish speaking delegates at the Philadelphia N.C.S.L. conference next year.

The St. Louis N.C.S.L. Conference booth included four exhibitor passes for P.R.E.C.; Allan Lubin, President; Neal Frederiksen, Executive Director/Secretary, and Directors Elizabeth Clayton and Al Katzenberger. Director Donald Killoren used Al Lubin's pass July 29, and St. Louis Teachers Union Local 420 Trustee George Bordenave used the pass July 30. Mr. Bordenave brought several of his friends from New Orleans, Louisiana to the exhibit.

Overall, the conference was a great success. We met a lot of people, and we are welcomed back to next year's conference (Philadelphia, PA, August 6-10, 1997). William T. Pound, the Executive Director of the National Conference of State Legisla-

tures (N.C.S.L.) suggested we contact Ron Saell of the financial programs of the N.C.S.L. and try to be part of a workshop for the legislatures at the Philadelphia Conference. This would be a great opportunity for our leading Georgists in the area to show the state legislatures our message: public revenue from land (site) value taxation (charges).