

Washington State Legislature Studies Two-Rate Tax Reform

by Eugene Levin

Three legislative bills calling for a study of the two-tier property tax system have been introduced in Olympia, Washington — one in the house, and two in the Senate. After hearings in both houses, two of the bills were passed out of committee. The Senate bill passed several steps before it languished in the Rules Committee at the end of the legislative session. They all might have gone further had the session been longer, and the legislative load less heavy. Some thirty bills dealing with aspects of the property tax system had to be dealt with, and only a few became law.

Years of effort by Washington State Georgist Association (WSGA) members, especially Marvin Saillard and Meta Heller of Olympia, and WSGA president Hamlet Hilpert, have educated a number of legislators about the merits of the two-tier tax. These legislators have become sufficiently interested to sponsor or co-sponsor the bills calling for such a study. The two-tier property tax study bill had the support of People for Fair Taxes, a well known coalition group which includes church, labor, retirement, and educational associations and the League of Women Voters.

An extensive and carefully detailed proposal to do a study of the two-tier property tax in Washington State, done by Walter Rybeck of the Center for Public Dialogue, has been influential in these efforts. Also useful is a small study funded by the WSGA titled *Application of a Hypothetical Two-Rate Property Tax in King County* by Dr. Thomas Gihring, Planning Consultant.

The WSGA sponsored a 25 page booklet, *Look to the Land*, also by Walter Rybeck, with contributions by some well-known and not so well-known Georgists. Just published in March, the booklet targets Washington, but can provide a basis for similar efforts in other states. For more information about the bills, studies or booklet contact Eugene Levin, 1161 21st Avenue East, Seattle 98112. Phone/FAX: 206-324-6742.