

# NTA NETWORK

JUNE 2011

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Dear NTA Members,

A quarter century ago, the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA86) was wending its way through Congress. Many NTA stalwarts in government and the private sector worked on aspects of the legislation. I was a new staffer at the Office of Tax Analysis in the Treasury Department, having taken a leave of absence from teaching to see this remarkable piece of legislation in the making. When I arrived in 1985, the smart money was betting that TRA would end up a watered down parody of the ambitious Treasury staff blueprint first unveiled in 1984. The first draft out of the House was certainly not encouraging. But somehow, through a series of minor miracles (engagingly chronicled in *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* by Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan Murray), a major reform was taking shape in Congress. On June 24, the Senate passed a bill with a 27 percent top individual income tax rate (billed the "27 percent solution") by a vote of 97-3. Fundamental base-broadening rate-cutting tax reform had serious momentum, and a conference report, which hewed much more closely to the Senate than the House draft passed both houses by wide margins in August. President Reagan signed the landmark legislation on October 22.

It took me almost 25 years to return to teaching. (I'm at Syracuse University now after many years working for government and think tanks.) In the intervening years, we've watched as the tax base has eroded and rates increased as tax reform has become a wistful memory. The virtues of tax reform have been a recurring theme at NTA conferences and in the *National Tax Journal*, but the idea of another TRA86 has seemed a quixotic quest.

Now events have conspired to make tax reform possible again. The president and a few congressional leaders have talked about corporate tax reform and trimming individual income tax expenditures as a way to reduce deficits without raising marginal tax rates. The president's debt reduction task force proposed eliminating most income tax expenditures with part of the revenue saved going to debt reduction and the rest used to lower income tax rates. Other bipartisan groups have made similar proposals. Although still a long

shot, tax reform seems more plausible than at any time since that summer 25 years ago.

### The Year in Review

Wojciech Kopczuk and Karl Scholz organized a terrific annual conference in Chicago last November. Although the conference covered a wide range of tax and budget policy issues, a major theme was how tax, spending, and regulatory policy at all levels of government should respond to the current economic malaise and the looming debt crisis. Narayana Kocherlakota, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, gave a very accessible introduction to his research on dynamic public finance. Doug Elmendorf, Director of the Congressional Budget Office, let us inside the CBO's deliberations on the relative effectiveness of various economic stimulus measures considered by Congress. And Emmanuel Saez, winner of the 2009 John Bates Clark Award and the 2010 MacArthur Award, spoke about tax reform in theory and practice. Henry Aaron was recognized for his lifetime of contributions to public finance, and public policy more generally, in the Holland Medal session. (A tribute to Henry Aaron appears later in this *Network*.) Nirupama Rao of MIT was awarded the NTA Dissertation Award. And the graduate student session, organized by Andrew Hanson of Georgia State University and Jonathan Rork of Reed College, was a great success.

Laura Kalambokidis once again conducted a survey of NTA members about the conference. (Laura's analysis of the survey results appears later in this *Network*.) Eighty-three of the 325 conference attendees and 35 other members completed the survey. While respondents were overall very happy with the conference, the survey suggested some room for improvement. As much as respondents enjoyed the general sessions, they expressed even more enthusiasm for concurrent sessions (presumably because they offer a choice of topics). This fall there will be one fewer general session than in 2010. Respondents liked Chicago a lot, but disliked the distance of the conference from the Loop. The 2011 conference will be in the French Quarter of New Orleans (right downtown). And the 7:30 a.m. graduate student session was

deemed too early by many conference goers. Thus, that experiment will not be repeated in 2011.

I'm grateful to the sponsors of the fall conference, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, which hosted a lovely reception, and AARP, the Andrew Young School of Georgia State University, the Brookings Institution, Deloitte, and Vanguard for their generous financial support.

Organized by Bob Williams, the Spring Symposium appropriately focused on the possibilities for tax reform as the nation tries to solve short- and long-term economic problems. The first day considered large themes like tax reform in an international context, uncertainty created by the proliferation of temporary tax provisions, macroeconomic effects of tax reform, and business tax reform. At lunch, Emil Sunley was awarded the Davie-Davis award for public service (Harvey Galper's tribute to Emil follows later in this issue), and David Leonhardt provided a journalist's perspective on tax reform and urged us to continue to speak truth to power.

For the second year, the American Tax Policy Institute (ATPI) financially supported and organized the Friday morning sessions, which explored issues with individual and corporate income tax expenditures. It combined the perspectives of policy analysts and practitioners and was just fascinating. I'm very much hoping that our collaboration with ATPI will prove to be a permanent fixture of the NTA spring symposium.

Dan Crippen, new executive director of the National Governors' Association, kicked off the state and local program at lunch. He told us about the challenges facing governors of both parties (and his challenges in learning about them and learning how to communicate with his members). The afternoon program, organized by Mike Wasylenko, explored the enormous issues facing state governments during a recession while the federal government is withdrawing support and examined the structural changes that might make state and local governments more able to withstand the next economic downturn.

In addition to major support from ATPI, the Investment Company Institute, the Tax Policy Center, and Vanguard helped make the spring conference possible.

I should note that many people work hard to make these conferences a success beyond the headliners already mentioned. First, there are the program committees, whose members brainstorm with the conference chairs about themes and organize sessions and help recruit luncheon speakers. Second, the truly indispensable people are Charmaine Wright and Betty Smith, who organize the hundreds of details required to make a conference a success. They make it look easy, which is simply a testament to their great dedication and competence. NTA Executive Director Fred Giertz provides overall direction and guidance.

Finally, you'll notice that I mentioned financial sponsors for the conferences, which is the single most important reason that the NTA has managed to sustain a relatively strong fiscal position despite the stock market decline and some fall-off in membership. This initiative was pushed strongly by Harvey Galper, and several board members have worked very hard to expand the donor base. Pete Brady is currently heading the fund raising committee for a second year. I'm very grateful for this work.

If you have ideas about possible supporters of the NTA, please share them with me, Pete, or other members of the board. Also, of course, you can always donate to the NTA yourself. Members contributed \$11,455 in the past year. Of course, as a member of NTA you're well aware that your contribution is generally tax deductible. I have to say "generally" because you all know that there are some limits on current deductions, but you also know that they only apply in very unusual circumstances that almost certainly don't apply to you, so get out your checkbook. Send your check to National Tax Association, 725 15th St. NW #600, Washington DC 20005-2109. Thanks!

### Coming Attractions

As noted, the Fall conference will be in New Orleans at the JW Marriott Hotel in the French Quarter. Jane Gravelle and Jon Bakija are organizing the conference, which promises to be timely and informative. The program committee is now sifting through 225 submitted papers to produce a program sure to offer an exceptionally high quality and diversity of topics and papers. Nobel laureate Peter Diamond of MIT and Scott Cowen, the president of Tulane, who is renowned for his work in education reform and rebuilding New Orleans, will be the luncheon speakers. Alan Auerbach of Berkeley will be awarded the Holland Medal. And I will give my valedictory speech.

One of the privileges of being NTA president is that I got to nominate the location for the conference. New Orleans, despite its enormous challenges, is an exciting city with wonderful jazz, food, and a vibrant night life. I'm thinking this conference will be a tax policy Mardi Gras—a raucous celebration of tax policy at a time when it's more important than ever. *Laissez les bon temps rouler!* Or, in any event, the weather is likely to be nicer than up north and the food will be good.

I'd also like to remind you that discounted registration is available to students. Please encourage students who are interested in tax to attend. The annual conference is exciting for students and a great way to get them involved in the NTA (and, hopefully, ultimately add to our membership base).

There are some other upcoming conferences that may be of interest to our members. NTA members can register at the National Association for Business Economics Symposium on Transfer Pricing (July 26-27, 2011 in Arlington, VA) at the NABE member rate. <http://www.nabe.com/transfer2011/index.html>

For the first time in many years, the Annual Congress of the International Institute of Public Finance will be held in the United States, at the University of Michigan, August 7-11, 2011. Joel Slemrod's Office of Tax Policy Research at UM is sponsoring it. <http://www.iipf.org/cng.htm>.

Former NTA president Ranjana Madhusudhan is once again organizing a session at the 2011 Federation of Tax Administrators' Revenue Estimation and Tax Research Conference on October 16-19, 2011 in Charleston, WV. [http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/meet/11rev\\_est/default.html](http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/meet/11rev_est/default.html).

Finally, I want to let you know that the National Tax Association is now a "participating organization" of the Western Economic Association. The participating organization status means that conference registration fees for sessions organized by members of the NTA are the same as conference registration fees for WEAI members. The conferences are held annually in

late June and early July in Western cities. The next four will be in San Francisco (2012), Seattle (2013), Denver (2014), and Honolulu (2015).

**Odds and Ends**

The NTA executive committee works something like the classic overlapping generations (OLG) model. The basic idea is that a one-year presidential term is not much time to get things done, especially considering that we all have demanding day jobs. Through the OLG leadership model, however, I'm connected to four other presidents—two past presidents and two future presidents. We've collaborated very closely. I'm trying to follow up on initiatives that Jim Poterba and Harvey Galper started, and I'm sure that Matt Murray and Diane Rogers, who are scheduled to follow me subject to approval of the membership, will continue that tradition.

A couple of big things are going on. One is fundraising as I've already mentioned. Another is finding a way to expand the membership. Outreach to students is one aspect. But I'm also looking for other ideas.

The attached chart below shows that overall membership has declined by about 9 percent since 1997. Academic memberships have grown significantly, by 16% since 1997. Government memberships are off by about 10%, but they fluctuate greatly and the difference is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Business memberships, however, are off by a statistically significant 60%. Student memberships are also below 1997 levels, but the difference is not significant. The overall drop in membership is significant, but probably an artifact of the economic meltdown. The 2010 membership level is identical to that in 1998. The drop in corporate and professional memberships and the increase in academic memberships are probably related to the fact that the conferences and the NTJ have emphasized academic rigor more than in prior years. Removing the effect of the economy, the overall trend does not appear troubling, but I'd still welcome your comments and suggestions about how to boost membership.

In other news, the *National Tax Journal* under the editorship of George Zodrow and John Diamond of Rice University is doing very well. At the last annual board meeting, Zodrow reported that the qualities of paper submissions are getting better and the online submission process is working well. Two-thirds of papers are being processed within six months of submission. The Spring Symposium issue is now being published in December, which allows paper authors more time to edit their conference papers and the editors more time to put the volume together. This significantly eased the publication schedule and should result in better quality control. In addition to the Symposium issue, two forum issues, which Diamond edits, have been published in the past twelve months.

Katie Fitzpatrick and Jeffrey Thompson won the Richard Musgrave prize for the best article published in the *National Tax Journal* in 2010 ("The Interaction of Metropolitan Cost-of-Living and the Federal Earned Income Credit: One Size Fits All?" 63 *NTJ* 419-45, September). And Jon Bakija and Michelle Hanlon won the 2010 Referee of the Year Award.

A recent survey of economists found that the *National Tax Journal* is tied for 11<sup>th</sup> most popular journal (tied with the *Journal of Urban Economics*). See [http://econjwatch.org/file\\_download/487/DavisMay2011.pdf](http://econjwatch.org/file_download/487/DavisMay2011.pdf) (pp.140-141). This is a real testament to the quality of the papers and the editing. Kudos to the paper authors and editors, past and present, who made this possible.

And thanks to Harvey Galper for his excellent stewardship of the NTA last year, and for his help and guidance as I try to follow in his footsteps. And thanks to Pam Moomau for editing the *NTA Network*.

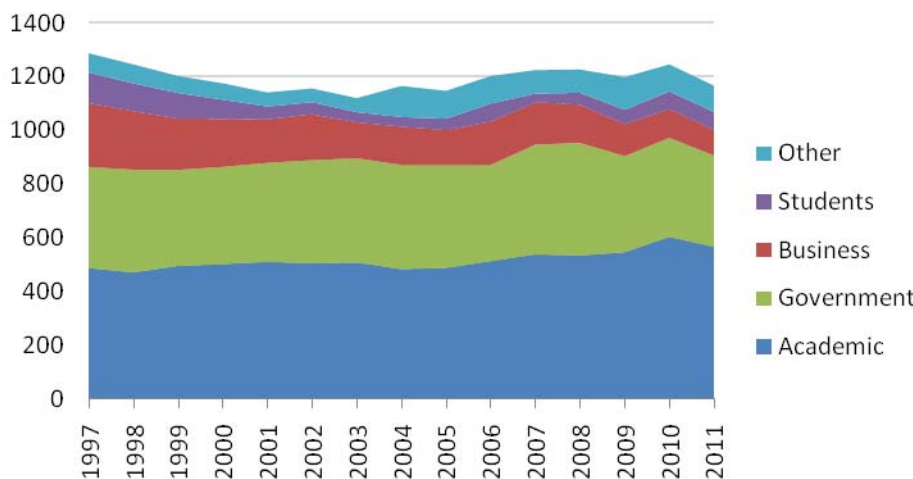
I hope to see you in New Orleans.

Sincerely,

Len Burman

President

**Major Categories of NTA Membership, 1997-2011**



## Daniel M. Holland Medal Awarded to Henry J. Aaron

Established in 1993 in honor of MIT Professor and long-time *National Tax Journal* editor Dan Holland, The Daniel M. Holland Medal is awarded annually by the NTA to someone who has made outstanding contributions to the study and practice of public finance.

The 2010 Dan Holland Medal was awarded to Henry J. Aaron. Henry Aaron is a Senior Fellow of Economic Studies and holds the Bruce and Virginia MacLaury Chair at the Brookings Institution, where has been since 1968. He has also served as Assistant Secretary for planning and evaluation at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; taught at the University of Maryland; chaired the 1979 Advisory Council on Social Security; and served on numerous boards and commissions. He is currently on the Board of Directors of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. He holds a PhD and MA from Harvard University and a BA from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Following are excerpts from remarks delivered at the Chicago conference by one of his colleagues, William G. Gale, on the occasion of Henry Aaron receiving the Daniel Holland Award at the Annual Conference on Taxation on November 19, 2010.

Hank was one of the main reasons I came to Brookings and he did not disappoint. His work had always been an inspiration to me as a graduate student and a young scholar. He had worked on seemingly every major topic in public finance that I was interested in— tax reform, social security, inflation, housing, welfare, the New Deal. He'd done fascinating work on health —including two books - *Painful Prescription* in 1984, *Serious and Unstable Condition* in 1991. It's important to remember that 25 years ago health economics was much more of an intellectual wilderness. Hank was one of a few major researchers to be focusing on the issues even back then, producing work that has been remarkably prescient and insights that have proven remarkably enduring.

Hank has also worked on some esoteric topics that show a doggedness and passion for getting things right. In particular, he wrote a short treatise in the 1980s that explains and analyzes the complex tax treatment of life insurance companies that, to this day, remains a cult classic, and probably the single best thing written on the subject. I admire not just the breadth and depth of his work, but in particular, the passion he brings to his writing, the informed use of theory, the rigorous application of evidence, the honest-broker willingness to call things as they are, and the absolute, utter clarity of expression.

Hank had published over 30 volumes. But I want to just clarify that, although this session celebrates Hank's previous lifetime of accomplishment, he is very much still active and involved in thinking and writing about a wide variety of current issues.

One of the things we talk about at Brookings is finding people who are "Brookings Economists." Hank is a wonderful example of what we means by this phrase: someone who has a foot in both the academic and the policy worlds; someone who can create and use the best academic research to inform policy questions and someone who can use emerging policy issues as a motivation to focus and explore deeper research questions; someone with a willingness to explain those findings, to follow truth where it leads, and to "mix it up" in the public discussion.

Now, some things you may not know about Henry Aaron:

- Hank is an extremely knowledgeable wine aficionado.
- The best place to listen to classical music in the Dupont Circle area is in Hank's office.
- Hank has been an inveterate bicyclist for years.
- He and his wife Ruthie have several grand children. Hank and Ruthie are doting grandparents and as a team, they should be an inspiration to us all.

Henry is, also, quite simply, the best editor in the world. I'd go so far as to say that if you've never been edited by Hank, you've never really been edited. He and I co-edited a 1996 tax reform volume together and I was somewhat new to all of that, so I mainly watched and learned as he cleaned up people's writing. I was frankly astonished at times, both at the "can you really do that" scope of the edits and at the clarity of the resulting text without loss of substance or nuance.

So, let me cut to the chase. This is a tremendously well-deserved award to an outstanding scholar, a passionate policy analyst, and wonderful human being. I literally can't think of a more worthy recipient of the Holland award. I congratulate Hank on all that he has accomplished, and the NTA on its wise and inspired choice.

**-Bill Gale**



Henry Aaron at the 2010 Annual Meeting



## Emil Sunley Receives Davie /Davis Award

The Davie/Davis Award, established in 2005, is in memory of NTA members Bruce Davie and Al Davis and honors NTA members who served the public through the provision of expert analyses and objective advice on issues of taxation and government finance to elected officials, other policy makers, and the general public. This year's recipient is Emil M. Sunley. Following are excerpts from remarks made by Harvey Galper, one of his colleagues at the U.S. Treasury's Office of Tax Analysis, during the presentation of the award at the 2011 NTA Spring Symposium on May 19, 2011.

There is no more fitting recipient of this award than Emil. He embodies the spirit of both Bruce, who was Emil's close personal friend and poker buddy, and Al, both of whom spent their careers devoted to public service. I have known Emil for only 37 years since he was foolhardy enough to hire me to work at Treasury's Office of Tax Analysis in 1974.

First, here are the basics about Emil's career. He received his B.A. in Economics from Amherst and his Ph. D. from Michigan, writing his dissertation on the determinants of government spending within metropolitan areas. He studied with Harvey Brazier, one of the earlier leading public finance economists who recognized the importance of economics as a tool for sound policy analysis, a lesson that Emil learned well and applied immediately upon coming to work at Treasury right after graduate school starting in 1968. He moved up the ladder quickly as the wunderkind of OTA and became the head of the Office in 1973.

Emil then left OTA to become a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in 1975 only to return as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy from 1977-81. He was the Director of Tax Analysis at Deloitte & Touche from 1981-1992, and then joined the IMF in 1992 as Assistant Director of the Fiscal Affairs Department. In that capacity, he led missions to over 50 countries, winning the Frequent Flyer of the Year award in 2003. (I made that last part up.)

Emil was the recipient of three service awards while at Treasury: a Meritorious Service Award in 1975; Meritorious Presidential Rank Award in the Senior Executive Service in 1980; and an Exceptional Service Award in 1981 at the time of his leaving Treasury. Emil retired from the IMF in 2006 only to continue to participate in tax missions around the world for the IMF and for other organizations wise enough to know that whatever rates he may charge, his value is incomparably greater.

A strong supporter of the NTA, Emil served on the Board of Directors, the Editorial Board of the *NTJ*, Chair of the Program Committee, and as President of our Association in 1995-96. Emil testified before Congress on more than 40 occasions and with all this, he still found time to publish numerous articles, book chapters and reports in the *National Tax Journal* and elsewhere on a wide range of tax issues that engaged his thoroughly inquisitive mind.

Now, note this about Emil's career: he started out in public finance at the metropolitan area level, then the national level, and then the international level. We are all waiting for the next step in this progression. Nor did this expanding geographical reach limit Emil's scope. Along the way, he became expert in: personal income taxation; corporate taxation; value added taxation; excise taxation;

natural resource taxation; housing taxation; taxation of financial institutions, both western and Islamic; and I am sure I have left out a few other specializations.

My first foray into tax policy analysis was a disaster, but Emil stayed with me, and eventually I picked it up; which was pretty fortunate because Emil was and continues to be thoroughly committed to the highest professional standards in his work. To Emil, public service is a calling. All empirical and conceptual work is to be well considered, produced on time, presented clearly and able to advance the policy debate on the subject at hand (as well as enhance the position of Treasury in the inter-governmental competition for ideas and influence). And if that meant working late nights and weekends, so be it. And if that meant calls to your home to get back in the office, so be that too.

But Emil is also a great team player and demanded and expected no less of himself than of his staff. The environment he created at Treasury of a team working together was, I believe, unique in government. It was a demanding, often exhausting, yet thoroughly exhilarating experience. Many of us who worked at OTA have been trying to capture that same environment in our professional careers ever since. Along with tax policy, I learned the importance and the value of working as a team from Emil, too.

In sum, Emil is so deserving of this award because he has been throughout his career the consummate public servant, offering wisdom as well as knowledge; real-world, practical solutions to difficult tax problems; and always, always willing to explore new ideas, new challenges and new countries (although there are only a few left now that he has not yet visited).

**-Harvey Galper**



Emil Sunley (left) and Harvey Galper at the 2011 Spring Symposium



NTA Presidents with Dan Holland Medal winner at 2010 Annual Conference

### Impressions of the 2010 Annual Conference on Taxation

[As part of the NTA's continuing effort to tailor the Annual Conference on Taxation to members' needs, Laura Kalamokidis conducted a survey of members and shares the results.]

For the third consecutive year, the NTA board surveyed annual conference attendees to evaluate the success of the conference. The board also surveyed NTA members who did *not* attend the conference to learn what influenced that decision. The information gathered from the survey is already influencing the planning for future NTA events.

Shortly after the conference, we emailed a link to an online survey to a total of 1,235 NTA members and conference attendees. After one month, 83 of the 325 conference attendees and 35 non-attendees had completed the survey, for a response rate of 26% of attendees, 4% of non-attendees, and an overall response rate of 10%.

The survey included 18 questions, with the answer to the first ("Did you attend the 103rd Annual Conference of the National Tax Association?") directing respondents to separate sets of questions for attendees and non-attendees. Both groups were asked about themselves and their general preferences for the NTA conference. Attendees were also asked to evaluate the 2010 conference. Two open-ended questions asked for additional comments on the 2010 conference and suggestions for the 2011 conference. We report the most salient results from the survey below.

To learn about the respondents, the survey asked about professional fields, employers, and attendance at previous NTA annual conferences. Most respondents (78%) named economics as their primary professional field, with fewer than ten respondents each naming law, accounting, public affairs, political science, and tax preparation.

Most respondents (60%) reported being employed by a college or university, with the next largest employers being the federal government (17%), nonprofit organizations (8%), and state and local government (5%). Students made up six percent of the respondents.

Among non-attendee respondents, the largest share (39%) last attended the conference 2-5 years ago, 29% attended in 2009, and 19% last attended more than five years ago. Only four respondents have never attended the conference. For about 15% of attendee respondents, 2010 marked their first NTA conference.

How long has it been since you attended the NTA Annual Conference?		
Answer Options	Re- sponse Percent	Re- sponse Count
I attended in 2009.	29.0%	9
2-5 years	38.7%	12
more than 5 years	19.4%	6
I have never attended the NTA Annual Conference.	12.9%	4
<i>answered question</i>		<b>31</b>

### Impressions of the 2010 Annual Conference on Taxation (cont)

The annual conference offers attendees a variety of opportunities, and the board wanted to know how important those reasons are to both those who attend the conference and those who do not. We asked respondents to rate several opportunities provided by the conference on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from unimportant (1) to very important (5). Over all respondents, the highest rated opportunities (with their average ratings reported in parentheses) were: meeting and talking with people with similar research interests (4.45), catching up on the latest research (4.45), and getting feedback on and exposure for my own research (4.13). Close behind were: reconnecting with friends and colleagues (3.96), and learning things that I can use in my job (3.68). The relative rankings varied little between attendees and non-attendees.

The annual conference offers attendees a number of different opportunities. How important are the following conference opportunities to you?						
Answer Options	Did attend		Did not attend		Total respondents	
	Rating Average	Response Count	Rating Average	Response Count	Rating Average	Response Count
reconnecting with friends and colleagues	4.20	75	3.34	29	3.96	104
meeting with potential employers	2.33	73	2.41	27	2.35	100
meeting with potential employees	1.96	73	1.93	27	1.95	100
getting feedback on and exposure for my own research	4.27	75	3.76	29	4.13	104
catching up on the latest research	4.51	75	4.31	29	4.45	104
visiting an appealing location	3.14	74	2.76	25	3.04	99
meeting and talking with people with similar research interests	4.60	75	4.04	28	4.45	103
gathering information and ideas for media stories	1.39	72	1.89	27	1.53	99
learning things that I can use in my job	3.70	73	3.61	28	3.68	101
Other (please specify)		0		1		1
<b>answered question</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>29</b>		<b>104</b>

A number of variables can influence the decision to attend the annual conference. Attendees ranked two factors as most important: the appeal of the preliminary conference program and whether attendees participate in the program. The two most important considerations in the decision to attend (using the same five-point scale) were “presentations on the preliminary program that are closely linked to my interests” (3.74) and “presentations on the preliminary program that I expect will be of high quality” (3.59). A close third place went to “having a paper on the program” (3.41), followed by “being on the program as a discussant or moderator” (3.00).

This year, how important were the following in your decision to attend the annual conference?		
Answer Options	Rating Average	Response Count
having a paper on the program	3.41	74
being on the program as a discussant or moderator	3.00	72
conference registration fee	2.10	73
travel and hotel cost	2.33	73
location of the conference	2.84	74
presentations on the preliminary program that I expect will be of high quality	3.59	73
presentations on the preliminary program that are closely linked to my interests	3.74	73
Other (please specify)		2
<b>answered question</b>		<b>75</b>

## Impressions of the 2010 Annual Conference on Taxation (cont)

We also asked respondents who did *not* attend the conference about their deciding factors. Not being on the conference program appears to dominate the decision not to attend the NTA conference: the most important consideration for non-attendees (using the same five-point scale) was “not having a paper on the program” (3.54) and “not being on the program as a discussant or moderator presentations” (2.85) ranked third. The second most important consideration was “travel and hotel cost” (3.00). Non-attendees rank the preliminary program as much less important than did attendees. Non-attendees rated both of the preliminary program factors as not important or of little importance.

<b>This year, how important were the following in your decision not to attend the annual conference?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
not having a paper on the program	3.54	28
not being on the program as a discussant or moderator	2.85	27
conference registration fee	2.48	27
travel and hotel cost	3.00	27
location of the conference	2.04	27
not enough presentations on the preliminary program that I expected would be of high quality	1.78	27
not enough presentations on the preliminary program that were closely linked to my interests	2.04	27
Other (please specify)		10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>29</b>

Non-attendee respondents were asked to share any other information about their decision not to attend the conference. Of ten who offered additional information, five said that the dates of the conference conflicted with their other obligations.

We asked respondents who attended the 2010 Annual Conference to rate aspects of the conference program on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very poor (1) to excellent (5). Most program elements received ratings between good and excellent, with two rated between fair and good. The top-rated elements were the concurrent sessions (4.51), the graduate student session (4.40), and the general sessions on tax reform (4.35) and fiscal outlooks (4.33).

We also asked attendee respondents to rate the conference facilities on the same five-point scale. With a rating of four translating to good, nearly all of the facilities were rated good or excellent. The highest rating went to the city of Chicago as the conference location (4.54), but the hotel location within the city—McCormick Place—earned respondents' lowest rating, 2.46, translating to poor. Most of the respondents who shared additional comments were dissatisfied with the hotel's distance from city amenities.

In planning the conference program, there is always a trade-off among the goals of including the largest number of high-quality papers possible, ensuring adequate time for presentations and discussion, and incorporating discussion panels. To help with program planning, we asked conference attendees about the mix of four-paper, three-paper, and panel discussion sessions. A majority of respondents (57%) thought the mix of sessions at the 2010 conference was “about right.” 48% would prefer more three-paper sessions, and 23% would prefer more four-paper sessions. (Responses total more than 100% because respondents were allowed to check multiple boxes.)

-Laura Kalambokidis



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS at the NTA's ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN NEW ORLEANS

**Graduate Student Session:** The National Tax Association will sponsor one session at the Annual Conference in New Orleans (November 17-19, 2011) that will consist entirely of graduate student papers (papers co-authored with faculty mentors should be submitted for the general call for papers). Interested students should submit full contact information, a one-page abstract, and a brief letter of nomination from a faculty mentor or advisor directly to Andrew Hanson at [ahanson@gsu.edu](mailto:ahanson@gsu.edu), by **July 29, 2011**. Abstracts submitted for the Graduate Student Session should *not* be submitted simultaneously for the general call for papers. In your e-mail cover letter, please indicate whether you would be interested in (a) serving as a discussant for the Graduate Student Session or (b) participating in the Graduate Student Research Forum (see below) in the event that your paper is not selected for the Graduate Student Session.

**Graduate Student Research Forum:** The NTA's Annual Conference in New Orleans, November 17-19, 2011) will also have a student poster session that will allow students to network with other tax professionals and potential employers. Students will present their research one-on-one and in a small group setting. Interested students should submit full contact information, a one-page abstract, and a brief letter of nomination from a faculty mentor or advisor directly to Andrew Hanson at [ahanson@gsu.edu](mailto:ahanson@gsu.edu) by **September 30, 2011**. Abstracts submitted for the Graduate Student Research Forum should *not* be submitted simultaneously for the general call for papers.

## JOB OPENINGS

See the NTA website for recent listings of jobs in taxation:

<http://www.ntanet.org/>

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### In Memoriam

#### John Shannon

Retired in 1987 as Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, and served as a Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute until 2001.

1977 winner of the Steven Gold Award



Fred Hickman and Emil Sunley at the Spring Symposium



At the New Orleans Aquarium—just down the street from 2011 NTA Conference

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Acosta, Jaime, Rice University, Houston, TX  
 Askew, Emily, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Washington, DC  
 Bailey, Jason, Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, Berea, KY  
 Baker, Amy, Florida Legislature, Tallahassee, FL  
 Bastani, Spencer, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden  
 Benitez-Silva, Hugo, SUNY-Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY  
 Bernardi, Luigi, University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy  
 Black, Dan, the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 Bradley, Sebastien, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Burton, David R., Alliance for Retirement Prosperity Association, Mason Neck, VA  
 Burtraw, Dallas, Resources for the Future, Washington, DC  
 Busse, Meghan, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL  
 Byrne, Paul, Washburn University School of Business, Topeka, KS  
 Charles, Jennifer, US Census Bureau, Washington, DC  
 Cho, Myeonghwan, Korea Institute of Public Finance, Seoul, Korea  
 Chyz, James, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
 Denardi, Maria Cristina, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 DeBacker, Jason, US Department of the Treasury, Washington, DC  
 Drake, Katherine, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ  
 Duggan, Mark G., University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
 Dwenger, Nadje, Max Planck Inst. for Tax Law & Public Finance, Munich, Germany  
 Eadington, William, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Foster, Taft, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 French, Eric, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 Garrett, Thomas, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 Godfrey, John, Takoma Park, MD  
 Gross, Tal, Columbia University, New York, NY  
 Gulati, Sumeet, University of British Columbia, Canada  
 Holen, Arlene, Technology Policy Institute, Washington, DC  
 Hoopes, Jeffrey, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Isen, Adam, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
 Jimenez-Angueira, Carlos, San Antonio, TX  
 Johnson, Barry, Internal Revenue Service, Washington, DC  
 Johnson, Erik, Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT  
 Kearney, Owen, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Klier, Thomas, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 Kling, Jeffrey, Congressional Budget Office, Washington, DC  
 Kopchian, Adam, S., New York  
 Kroft, Kory, Yale University, New Haven, CT  
 Lockwood, Lee, NBER, Cambridge, MA  
 Ma, Yu, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA  
 Malani, Anup, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
 Mansour, Mario, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC  
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 Mescal, Devan, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada  
 Miller, Joshua, University of Illinois at Chicago  
 Mohsin, Mohammed, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
 Newcomb, Joe, Internal Revenue Service, Washington, DC  
 Nichols, Mark, W., University of Nevada, Reno  
 Notowidigdo, Matthew, University of Chicago  
 Nowaczewski, Liliana, Western Michigan University, Lansing, MI  
 Olken, Benjamin, MIT, Cambridge, MA  
 Paramonova, Yulia, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Park, Jongsang, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Pashchenko, Svetlana, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
 Peichl, Andreas, IZA, Bonn, Germany  
 Phillips, Mark D., Chicago, IL  
 Pistaferri, Luigi, Stanford University, Stanford, CA  
 Rao, Nirupama, Wagner School of Public Service, NYU  
 Rosenberg, Joseph, The Urban Institute, Washington, DC

## New Members Cont'd

Rosenzweig, Adam, Washington University in St. Louis, MO  
 Ross, Justin, Bloomington, IN  
 Scheuer, Florian, Stanford University, Stanford, CA  
 Schoeder, Ingrid, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Washington, DC  
 Schulenburg, Christian, Berlin, Germany  
 Seidman, Jeri, University of Texas at Austin  
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 Vu, Ha, The World Bank, Washington, DC  
 Walker, David, Boston University School of Law, Boston, MA  
 Webber, Stuart C., Trinity Lutheran College, Everett, WA  
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 Williams, Heidi, MIT, Cambridge, MA  
 Won, Yunhi, Korea Institute of Public Finance, Seoul, South Korea  
 Yagan, Danny, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
 Yinghua, Jin, Daly City, CA  
 Yost, Benjamin, Herndon, VA  
 Young, Cristobal, Stanford University, Stanford, CA

## Members on the Move

Buettner, Thomas, to Friedrich Alexander University, Nuremberg, Germany  
 Cleeton, David, from Christopher Newport University to Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH  
 Lechner, Thomas, from the University of Utah to Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan  
 Nerre, Birger, from German Technical Corporation to Belgrade, Serbia  
 Nguyen-Thanh, David, from Accra, Ghana to Frankfurt, Germany  
 Sabelhaus, John, from the Investment Company Institute to the Federal Reserve Board Washington, DC



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