

# Longtime Treasury Economist Harry Grubert Dies

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By Stephanie Cumings

Harry Grubert, a longtime senior financial economist in the Treasury Office of Tax Analysis, died August 10 after a long illness.

“There will be no replacing Harry Grubert,” said James B. Mackie III, director of the Office of Tax Analysis.

Grubert was posthumously awarded the Albert Gallatin Award, Treasury’s highest honorary career service award, Mackie told Tax Analysts August 14. The award is conferred by the Treasury Secretary upon the retirement or death of a federal employee who served 20 or more years in the department and whose record reflects a “fidelity to duty.”

Grubert was “probably the smartest person who worked here,” Mackie said. “He was truly a genius.” Mackie said that Grubert was always someone Treasury officials could talk to about difficult economic or tax issues and that he was a “great resource for the office.”

Rosanne Altshuler, an economics professor at Rutgers University who frequently coauthored work with Grubert, said he was a “national treasure.”

“There was simply no one else with his knowledge of international tax working in the field,” Altshuler said. “His research and work for Treasury reflected his desire to improve tax policy. His economic intuition was legendary, as was his grasp of the tax laws and how they impacted the decisions of corporations.” She said Grubert was a “generous scholar” and that everyone who interacted with him learned from him.

For more than 40 years, Grubert had a major impact on the formation of policy on business and international taxation both within and outside the Treasury Department, according to a Treasury announcement of his passing. It notes that he made substantial contributions to every major Treasury analysis dealing with the taxation of corporations and multinational companies and that he increased understanding of the ways multinational corporations shift profits, especially using intangible assets, as well as the likely effects of reform proposals, such as moving to a territorial tax system.

Daniel Shaviro, a professor of taxation at New York University Law School, said that Grubert had “more knowledge about U.S. international taxation than any other living individual.” In a tribute to Grubert on his blog, Shaviro added that Grubert’s “long years of research and study regarding U.S. multinational firms, based on tax data that he understood better than anyone else, made him an extraordinary resource, almost like a public utility in light of his kind generosity and willingness to share what he knew.”

“Harry was an important, influential tax researcher who was held in high regard by those who

knew him personally,” said Tax Foundation President Scott Hodge. “His studies were must-reading for Tax Foundation economists and contributed greatly to our understanding of how taxes affect the economy and business behavior.”

Grubert published numerous papers on international tax issues in leading journals and contributed to *Tax Notes*. He was also an associate editor of international tax and public finance and an international research fellow at the Centre for Business Taxation at Oxford University. Grubert received his PhD in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 2010 Grubert was awarded the Davie-Davis Public Service Award from the National Tax Association, which honors NTA members who have served the public “through the provision of insightful analyses and objective advice on issues of taxation and government finance to elected officials, other policymakers, and the general public.” He was also awarded the Richard A. Musgrave Prize in 2000 for his article “Must Financial Services Be Taxed Under a Consumption Tax?” which he coauthored with Mackie for the *National Tax Journal*.