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President's message: Day at the Statehouse

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IREM's success as an organization is largely due to its highly rated education programs, management designations, and networking events. IREM is also very active in legislative issues that affect the real-estate industry, both at the state and national levels. For several years, the Boston Chapter has been coordinating Statehouse tours, both in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. IREM National has launched a new incentive, based on the Boston Chapter's success, to encourage local chapters to develop a "Day at the Statehouse" program.

Statehouse visits help us to develop relationships with our local legislators. At the visits, we inform our legislators about our expertise in the real estate trade and offer to provide information on proposed legislation associated with the real estate industry. These relations are important to help shape future legislation at the state level that will have an impact on our business.

On April 3, 2014 approximately 50 Member and Friends of IREM Boston toured the Massachusetts State House. Members were greeted by State Senator Brian Joyce and State Representative Bruce Ayers, Michael Brady and Tim Madden for a photo op on the grand staircase.

The "New" Statehouse was built in 1798, and is located across from the Boston Common on the top of Beacon Hill. The land was once owned by Massachusetts's first elected governor, John Hancock. Charles Bulfinch, the leading architect of the day, designed the building. The dome, originally made out of wood shingles, is now sheathed in copper and covered by 23 karat gold, which was added to prevent leaks into the State House. Two United States Presidents, John Quincy Adams and Calvin Coolidge, served in the state legislature in their early careers.

Senator Joyce escorted the group onto the Senate floor during a heated debate on a piece of legislation. Senator Joyce interrupted the session to formally introduce the IREM Group and read the IREM charter into the official records for the Massachusetts Senate; "The Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) is an international membership community of real estate managers across all property sectors who are dedicated to ethical business practices and maximizing the value of investment real estate. IREM is an affiliate of the National Association of Realtors and a trusted source for knowledge, advocacy and networking for the real estate community." The Senator then escorted the group out onto the Senate balcony for a breathtaking view of the Boston Skyline.

The tour continued into the House of Representatives, where we were met by State Representative Garlick. According to the rules of the House of Representatives, no one (not even the Governor) is allowed on the house floor without an escort from a State Representative. State Representative Garlick then escorted the group onto the house floor for a rare opportunity to stand behind the podium where JFK gave his famous "City on a Hill" speech on January 9, 1961.

In the House of Representatives hangs The Sacred Cod. The cod is five feet long and carved in pine. The Cod is so sacred that house rules prohibit the legislature to meet if the Cod is not present in the chamber.

On March 17th 1784, Mr. John Rowe of Boston arose from his seat in the Hall of Representatives at the Old State House, and offered the following motion: "That leave might be given to hang up the representation of a cod fish in the room where the House sit(s), as a memorial of the importance of the Cod-Fishery to the welfare of the Commonwealth...." A symbolic cod was placed in the hall, and was later moved to the new State House building in 1798. There it has remained ever since.

The fish is suspended above the entrance to the hall in the visitors' gallery, and the Speaker of the House faces the cod during the meetings. The carved fish is a 200 year old symbol of the bygone importance of the fishing industry in Massachusetts and remains an ancient symbol of prosperity for the people in the state.

One notable event in the history of the Sacred Cod occurred in 1933, when the fish was actually stolen or cod-napped by college students as a prank. The missing fish caused great reprehension and an investigation by the state police. After several days, an anonymous tip led to the detection and return of this ancient symbol.

Following the Statehouse tour, a networking event was held at the world famous Cheers Restaurant on Boston's Beacon Hill, "where everybody knows your name." Cheers was originally founded in 1969 as the Bull & Finch Pub. Cheers was made famous by the TV sitcom series from the 1980's. Members enjoyed an open bar with great food and networking.

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