For the first time in anyone’s memory, a Florida superintendent is running for national office.

“We have had lots of people in Florida who are qualified to be on the board of directors of the GCSAA,” said Joel Jackson, FGCSA president, at the state organization’s board meeting in August. “The problem has been finding a qualified superintendent who could afford to take the time away from his job. Being a golf course superintendent is a 365-day-a-year proposition down here.

“Serving on the board of directors is not like serving on one of the national committees. There is a lot of responsibility and a lot of travel involved in being a director.

“But Florida needs representation on the board. We are too important a part of our industry not to have a voice in the running of our professional association.

“That’s why I’m delighted to announce that Cecil has agreed to run if we will endorse his candidacy.

“Do I hear a motion?”

Every eligible voting hand in the Executive Conference Center of the Villas at Grand Cypress shot toward the ceiling.

So Cecil C. Johnston, CGCS, the 39-year-old superintendent of Avila G&CC in Tampa, became one of four candidates seeking to fill two vacancies on the board of directors of the 8,000-member Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

The election will be held during the GCSAA’s annual meeting, which begins at 1 p.m. on the final day of the convention. Directors serve two-year terms.

Johnston is immediate past president of the 600-member FGCSA, which is divided into 10 regional chapters.

The award-winning editor of his chapter newsletter for several years, Johnston has been most active in government relations and research funding.

As chairman of the state’s government relations committee, he singlehandedly coordinated the successful effort to gain permission to use Hoehlon in Florida to control goosegrass.

He has served on the research foundation funding committee of the Florida Turfgrass Association and was moderator of the 1988 FTGA Conference and Show.

A summa cum laude graduate of Lake City Community College’s school of Golf Course Operations, Johnston has designed a wash stand for maintenance vehicles which has drawn favorable comments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

His candidacy has been endorsed by all interested parties in the state, including the developers of his golf course, Jack Nicklaus and Robert Sierra.