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As the congressional Democratic majority ushers in new legislative priorities, the Green Industry, like most special interests, is vying for a seat at the table, which has a lot of new faces.

“We have seen that many green industry and agriculture advocates lost the election and won’t be back,” says lobbyist Carrie Riordan of the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America. “So we’ll be forming some new relationships with the Democrats who have taken their place, but we’re very optimistic that we’ll work very well with this new Congress.”

Issues for which the green industry might need advocates range from responsible water use and pesticide regulation to expanding the H-2B visa program and allowing association health plans (AHP) to unite across state lines.

Because the congressional majority appoints committee heads, the face and tone of many influential committees has changed, such as the Senate Environmental Committee now chaired by California’s Barbara Boxer.

“They have clearly stated that environmental issues will have more importance than they have under a Republican-controlled Congress,” Riordan says. “We look forward to working with this Congress to hopefully bring about things that are priorities for our association as well: clean water, clean air and responsible use of land and natural resources.”
But it was human resources that took immediate attention during the new legislature's first 100 hours. The House of Representatives passed a minimum wage increase from $5.15 to $7.25 during the next two years. The Senate version of the bill, which was being considered by the Senate Finance Committee at presstime, is expected to have tax breaks for small businesses to offset the wage hike. If passed, the two versions must be reconciled in a joint committee before it goes to President Bush, who has indicated he will sign it.

Though critics are construing it as anti-small business, the minimum wage hike likely will have little impact in many regions and industries where competition for labor already forces employers to exceed the federal minimum.

Golf facilities fall into that group, so superintendents' shouldn't feel an immediate sting because their employees already make more than the proposed increase. On average, groundkeepers are the lowest paid golf course staff at $8.47, and the horticulturists are the highest paid at $12.56, according to the GCSAA 2005 Compensation and Benefits Report.

But as the wage increases take hold for low-skill workers, it could eventually have a domino effect on higher-paying jobs, too, says Lyne Tumlinson, director of career services for GCSAA.

Many superintendents would be willing to accelerate pay if they could find qualified workers. Finding and retaining employees is the No. 1 professional concern for superintendents, according to the 2006 Golfdom state of the profession survey.

Healthcare
One issue Democrats already have moved to the front burner is healthcare. President Bush appears to be spending some time on the issue, too. In his State of the Union speech, the president proposed a standard income tax deduction for those who pay for their healthcare premiums.

That adjustment would eliminate federal income tax on $15,000 of income for families or $7,500 for single people, which would benefit the majority of superintendents. Currently, 92 percent of employers offer health insurance to superintendents, according to the GCSAA 2005 Compensation and Benefits Report; 88 percent of employers offer assistant superintendents medical benefits.

Of those who receive medical benefits, 46 percent of superintendents enjoy Continued on page 34
But it was human resources that took immediate attention during the new legislature’s first 100 hours. The House of Representatives passed a minimum wage increase from $5.15 to $7.25 during the next two years. The Senate version of the bill, which was being considered by the Senate Finance Committee at press time, is expected to have tax breaks for small businesses to offset the wage hike. If passed, the two versions must be reconciled in a joint committee before it goes to President Bush, who has indicated he will sign it.

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It’s not likely to get much easier. For another year, the 66,000 cap for H-2B visas has been reached early in the fiscal year, before many golf courses had opportunity to file for their share of seasonal workers, Riordan says. Fortunately, the previous Congress renewed the H-2B exemption, which means that previous H-2B visa workers can return to work in the United States without counting toward the 66,000 cap. That helps the green industries, but it’s not enough.

“That is a Band-Aid approach,” Riordan says. “Comprehensive immigration reform is a goal for everyone, but not everyone agrees with what that should look like or how it should happen. So we’re hoping that H-2B will be protected and expanded under new immigration reforms so the golf industry can continue to recruit and employ seasonal workers who are so vital to many golf operations around the United States.”

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employer-paid premiums, and 34 percent of
assistant superintendents have no monthly
out-of-pocket costs for healthcare.

Under Bush’s proposal, that benefit
would be taxed as income. But for employ-
ees who pay their own premiums or are
insured under a private plan, they will enjoy
the standard deduction.

Association health plans could lower
healthcare premiums as well. Also mentioned
in the State of the Union, AHPs would allow
professional associations, such as GCSAA,
to administer a national health insurance
plan. The theory is that more insured lives
equals more buying power and subsequent
lower costs, kind of like buying in bulk.
Currently, professional state association chap-
ters can organize health plans within the state,
but national associations cannot cross state
lines.

But don’t hold your breath. President
Bush asked Congress to consider the mech-
anism in 2005 to no avail, and the past six
congresses have discussed AHPs in com-
mittee, but it has only made it to the floor
for a vote one time. The American Associ-
ation of Health Plans is lobbying for its
defeat, saying that you cannot create a large-
group market by combining small groups
together.

State watch

Healthcare is hot at the state level, too. Mass-
achusetts passed a universal healthcare man-
date last April that requires every business
to offer healthcare to employees. If health-
care isn’t offered, then the employer must
contribute to a state-run fund to pay for
healthcare costs of uninsured people in
the state.

The New England Golf Course Owners
Association failed to return phone calls to
comment on how the rule, expected to go
into effect in July, might impact golf course
operations in Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, California Governor Arnold
Schwarzenegger proposed a similar plan for
the Golden State.

Jim Husting, chairman of governmen-
tal relations for the California GCSA, says
he doesn’t anticipate it will affect golf course
operation too much.

“I get the impression that it’s not a big deal,”
says Husting, the certified superintendent of
the Woodbridge Golf & Country Club. “I
can’t imagine an employer saying: ‘Now that
we have to pay into this healthcare system,
you’ve got to lay off two employees.’ That just
doesn’t click with me.”
Prevent the dreaded Pyricularia grisea (for which there is no cure) by planting new, Gray Leaf Spot resistant ryegrasses developed by doctors for Turf Merchants.

Even the best home lawns, parks and golf courses have Gray Leaf Spot in late summer when days are hot and humid. Gray Leaf Spot isn't pretty. It strikes quickly, affecting young ryegrass seedlings first with gray-to-brown lesions, often contorting tender blades into fishhook shapes. With prolonged hot, humid weather, large, mature turf areas can be lost to this dreaded disease.

In existing, older ryegrass turfs, Gray Leaf Spot can be addressed by applying a preventive fungicide, but once the pathogen has developed, little or nothing can cure it. It's prudent to take precautions.

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- Traffic stress tolerant
- Number 1 for spring green-up
- Gray Leaf Spot and Crown Rust resistant

Protege GLR™
- Highly disease resistant
- Exceptional seedling vigor, density, and leaf texture
- Top-rated NTEP performer

Manhattan 5 GLR™
- Next step up in the Manhattan tradition
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- Resists stem rust and leaf spot

Plus Pizzazz, Manhattan 4, and VIP 3

Pledge today to eradicate Gray Leaf Spot in your turf.
Specify these GLRTM resistant varieties from Turf Merchants, Inc.

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| TriStar 30 SG | Endorse | Sentry | Limestone F | Grass Greenzit

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Because great looking turf shouldn’t be left to chance.

There’s no room for guesswork when it comes to effective turf disease management. That’s why superintendents everywhere have come to depend on Cleary’s solutions to keep their fairways and greens healthy and beautiful. For over 70 years, we’ve played a big part in increasing turf quality and improving playing conditions on today’s best looking golf courses. Backed by our tradition of excellence in product research, innovative formulation and unsurpassed customer service, Cleary turf products have become the disease control solutions you can count on for outstanding performance, day in and day out.

NEW 3336 PLUS™ with ClearTec™ Activation Technology provides up to 50% more disease control.

Fast becoming the standard by which all fungicides are judged, new 3336 Plus™ power-packed with ClearTec™ Activation Technology, provides broad-spectrum disease control up to 50% longer on tough fairway diseases. Re-engineered from 3336 (the fungicide superintendents have trusted for over 30 years), new 3336 Plus is a unique formulation breakthrough. 3336 Plus makes more effective use of the active ingredient thiophanate-methyl, resulting in longer lasting disease control when compared with the products containing the same active ingredient.

Why leave your turf to chance? Discover all the advantages of 3336 Plus and our Solutions Program by contacting your local distributor or visiting www.clearychemical.com. We’ll make you, and your course, look better than ever.
Wanted: Watertight

Superintendents turn to irrigation companies to help them conserve water
S

hawn Emerson oversees six pri-

vate Jack Nicklaus-designed golf
courses in the scorching South-

west. Needless to say, Emerson

knows a thing or two about

water management.

And Emerson, the director of

agronomy at Desert Mountain Resort in

Scottsdale, Ariz., keeps a keen eye on what
golf course irrigation companies are doing to
keep up on water-management issues.

Of course, the big issue these days is that

the world is running low on freshwater —
dangerously low, depending on whom you
ask. But don't tell Joe Golfer that. He still
wants — and will outspokenly demand —
lush, green turf at his golf club.

Herein lies the problem for superinten-
dents, and not just those tending turf in the
country's arid regions. Water is scarce, not
to mention expensive, but many golfers are
unwilling to part with verdant turf. Hence,
many superintendents are stuck between a
rock and a sprinkler head. They must con-
serve water, yet they must provide emerald-
colored fairways. So superintendents are look-
ing to irrigation companies for help. More
than ever, they need equipment that can water
as precise as a laser-like pass from Peyton Man-
ning. The good news: Emerson says irrigation
companies are providing it.

"The irrigation companies have made
more strides in efficiency than any other part
of the industry," Emerson says. "They're ahead
of the game in regard to the efficient use of
water. And they're getting better at it."

Emerson's comments will bring beams to
the faces of the research and development staffs
at Rain Bird, Toro Golf Irrigation, Hunter
Industries and John Deere Golf Irrigation, as
well as other companies that make golf course
irrigation their business.

Dana Lonn, director of the center of
advanced turf technology at Toro, says water
management is a high priority at The Toro Co.
Recently, Lonn attended a meeting with Toros
senior management staff, and he says water was
a major topic in the discussion.

"There are very few days where there aren't
conversations about water conservation and
how we can help customers manage water
more effectively," Lonn says. "We've certainly
invested more than we did in the past in this
particular area."

Gregg Breningmeyer, director of sales and
marketing for John Deere Golf & Turf One
Source, wonders if the 21st century will bring
wars fought over freshwater. With that in
mind, it's time to take action, which includes
the golf industry doing its part to conserve
water, Breningmeyer says.

Warren Gorowitz, the national water man-
agement product sales manager for Ewing
Continued on page 42
Many... places to use them. ways to adjust them. reasons you'll love them.

Toro's 835S and 855S golf sprinklers put you in control and provide;

Uniform coverage by evenly distributing water across the spray pattern. Four-nozzle configuration (3 front, 1 back) provides the ultimate in nozzle combination flexibility.

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