



United We Stand

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Editor

Father and His Sons

Æsop. (Sixth century B.C.) Fables.

A father had a family of sons who were perpetually quarreling among themselves. When he failed to heal their disputes by his exhortations, he determined to give them a practical illustration of the evils of disunion; and for this purpose he one day told them to bring him a bundle of sticks. When they had done so, he placed the faggot into the hands of each of them in succession, and ordered them to break it in pieces. They tried with all their strength, and were not able to do it. He next opened the faggot, took the sticks separately, one by one, and again put them into his sons' hands, upon which they broke them easily. He then addressed them in these words: "My sons, if you are of one mind, and unite to assist each other, you will be as this faggot, uninjured by all the attempts of your enemies; but if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as these sticks."

"UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL"

During the most recent legislative session at our State Capitol many new regulatory ideas were kicked around including House File 414 that detailed Limitations on Synthetic Turf, HF 336 regarding Pesticide Application Warning and HF 500 and Senate File 74 describing Standards for Recycled Water. Perhaps the issues debated are good ideas, yet then again their implementation could deliver a serious blow to certain factions of our green industry.

I made the opportunity to sit in on several Senate hearings, two of which were related to water use in our state. It should come as no surprise that there are entities who do not feel that irrigation upon golf

courses is a good use of our limited resource. In fact there is one group making a direct point that golf courses are detrimental to our water supplies. This group is organized and well connected.

ourselves articulately and with pride. Together we can generate the funds necessary to support the muscle needed to help carry our heavy message to the proper destination.

"The point is if we represent ourselves in mass we will get attention. We will be asked questions and we will create our own destinies. But first we have got to get organized as a Green Industry and not just golf course superintendents."

The goal of the Coalition would be more than just a reactionary force swaying to the ever changing views of the prevailing representatives. The end game is to partner with key legislative voices, participate through testimony and become the "go to" source for green industry environmental and business issues. In essence we will help craft good legislation.

Their intentions are good and as we can only hope to partner with them in the future. As an industry, not just golf courses either; we have got to be prepared to represent ourselves or we can expect increased regulations and mandates. We need to get ahead of this curve or we will be impacted severely.

How can individual organizations protect themselves from poor regulation?

Or even more progressive, how can a limited membership group partner with legislators to develop good rules for both the community and businesses alike? As small groups, small dollars can be contributed and a small impact can be made with small numbers of individuals. Or the small groups can band together, create a funding vehicle, hire a support team of lobbyists and represent our industry in a large group of concerned constituents. United we stand, divided we fall.

To that end the Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation is discussing a potentially mutually beneficial partnership with the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association to form a coalition on behalf of the Green Industry. Together we represent over 80,000 employees and contribute over 11.5 billion dollars to the state economy. Together we can be a very LOUD voice and as professionals present

During one of my forays I sat beside two other green industry representatives. We got the look from every Senator in attendance, not the negative kind, but rather, "who are these guys? Hmmm.. suddenly we have an audience?" Pretty cool actually as I even answered a simple question for the group and had the chance to introduce myself prior to the meeting with a big dog on the opponent's team.

You should have seen the heads turn at the second freshwater meeting I attended. Senators recognized me and took notice of my presence. The point is if we represent ourselves in mass we will get attention. We will be asked questions and we will create our own destinies. But first we have got to get organized as a Green Industry and not just golf course superintendents.

Indeed this is a new and bold concept, not unlike the very successful and mutually beneficial creation of the Northern Green Expo. Utilizing the energy and talent of our diverse, yet similar organizations we can and will make a difference today, tomorrow and into the future.

There is but one key thread to the success of this charge, "united we stand, divided we fall."