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February of a new decade is upon us, and as I make final plans for the national GCSAA Conference in New Orleans I can't help but look at the big picture. This will be my fourteenth convention, and to be honest, they are all starting to blur together. They have all been very positive experiences; some have been more memorable than others. Like the time . . . well, maybe I should not mention names or get into any details. Trust me when I tell you my experiences have been fun and very educational. My point is that our profession and the golf industry in general offer to us many rewarding opportunities every day. Even more refreshing is that we as individuals are more than willing to share our ideas and help friends in need—we have a general willingness to get involved. This is what I find to be very enjoyable about our profession. It just does not seem as much like work when you enjoy what you do.

The golf course industry has more challenges now than ever. Changes to our jobs in the last ten years have been fast and furious. Many of these changes have been revolutionary to our daily tasks. The development of

new technology and equipment, our enhanced professional image, safer and more efficient pesticides, and an emphasis on more native planting at our golf courses—these, in my opinion, are some of the beneficial advances we have encountered and should be thankful for. On the flipside, we have seen less desirable intrusions in our profession: political interference, activist groups, competition,

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increased pressure, job shortages and governmental regulations, to name a few. Unfortunately, these are not one person's opinions, but realities we need to address. Two current issues we must deal with are the Plumber's Law and Food Quality Protection Act. I feel these types of challenges to our professional environment will be forthcoming in a frequent manner.

There was a time, not too long ago, that we were content being ourselves, the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. We were a

proudly self-sufficient foundation and needed no one else to support what we did. The GCSAA intervened, and to some degree, we rebelled against someone else telling us how to conduct our business. But we survived the "identity crisis" and in hindsight, have witnessed the success that our national association set out to be. Simply put, we are better in numbers. There are approximately 20,000 golf courses in our country—it sounds like a lot, but we are really a small cog in many wheels. Some of the issues we face, we can't face alone. We don't carry a big enough vote. There is a solution to this that I think we (the MAGCS) should explore: the Green Industry. The Green Industry is a coalition of associations that have banded together as allies to address specific issues as they come along. These are the numerous associations participating as of today. This list will give you a better idea of the numbers of individuals involved.

- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Illinois Landscape Contractors Association
- Illinois Nurserymen's Association
- Illinois Turfgrass Foundation
- Ornamental Growers Association of Illinois
- Association of Professional Landscape Designers
- Illinois Arborists Association
- Illinois Christmas Tree Growers
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Association
- Sports Turf Managers

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### On Course With the President


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- Illinois State Florists' Association
- Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents
- University of Illinois

You will notice that we are included in this association already, but as the representative for the Midwest, I can tell you that we are not very active. I have allocated a large portion of our responsibility to our partnership with the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation. While some of the issues concerning the Green Industry do not directly affect the golf course industry, others do and many in the future might. The industry currently is devoting its energy to producing a survey. The goal

is to find out the industry's economic impact for Illinois. We feel the findings will give us a bigger voice in Springfield (e.g., the Plumber's Law). I believe we, as an Association, should become active participants with the Green Industry. We are better in numbers. If we unite and support the causes of others, even if they may not have any impact on our day-to-day activities, we can expect the same from our allies in our time of need. There is no doubt, the best offense is a good defense. I would like to suggest that we support the efforts of the Green Industry, not only financially but with manpower as well. Currently the GCSAA is heading up a letter-writing campaign to the Environmental Protection Agency on how Dursban is used safely and why it is important to

golf course management. If you have not written a letter yet, you should. This is an example of the efforts needed from all of us in this day and age to protect what we have. Also, we must educate the decision-makers, who do listen to the numbers.

If you are interested in politics and preserving our right to do business in a safe and professional way, and would like to get involved with the Green Industry as an MAGCS representative, please call me. I hope you all have a safe and enjoyable trip to New Orleans. Don't forget to thank our commercial members for another outstanding hospitality room. See you at the national—God bless. 

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