

*Nobody to
look out
for us —
but us*



Tom Benefield, CGCSA
FGCSA President

For many years, we in the FGCSA have talked of our desire to be represented in the state capitol by someone who would be able to look out for our interests. We needed an individual who would be able to get to the right people. We wanted

someone who understood how the system worked and was ambitious enough to work with the system for the betterment of all golf courses.

Then a concept came along that we could hitch our wagon to: A single organization that was for the exclusive benefit of the entire golf course industry. It would be a vehicle

that would unite all the various golf course associations into one dynamic force, having one voice that would be heard in Tallahassee. It would help keep our six-billion-dollar industry growing and maturing into the largest economic force in this great state.

The FGCSA supported this cause from the start with state funds. We urged all our local chapters and members to support it with their own financial contributions. We asked the organization's lobbyist to attend state and local meetings. He did. We asked this lobbyist to look after our interests in Tallahassee. He did. We told this lobbyist if he would do for us, then we would do for him.

We didn't. We have dropped the ball. Our own lack of support for the most important step we have ever tried to take is placing this project in peril.

We have no one in the golfing industry to blame but ourselves. It would be easy to throw stones at some of the other golf associations that have not participated, but we

won't. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

We have learned from many years of experience about the great apathy which occupies the minds of the golfing public. We learned a long time ago the difficulty of raising money or awareness for issues that seem insignificant until after they are put into law — too late to do anything about. We have learned that matters such as the new style of shirts or how to get two more foursomes on the golf course or how to squeeze another nickel out of a scotch and soda are more important to owners and members than their loss of access to water and pesticides.

What we should have learned by now is that no one — and I mean *no one* — is going to support our interests but us! If we are to have a voice in Tallahassee then we will have to fund it ourselves. Not with other state golf associations and groups. No sir-ee. Purely and simply, just us.

My hat is off to all those clubs that have tried to support this effort. It is their contributions that have kept us from regressing, not only on the legislative front, but also in our research efforts. Yet it is imperative that we broaden our base of support for this effort if we are to succeed.

There has been some brainstorming among the FGCSA executive committee about this dilemma of fund-raising, not just for the underfunded project mentioned above, but for the various causes we fervently fight for each year.

We will be spelling out to the general membership what some of those ideas and ambitions are at the spring meeting of the FGCSA Board of Directors in Naples. It will succeed only if everyone will participate. The local external vice presidents will have details of this plan for their next meeting. Please seek them out and sign up for the program.

You can make the difference.