

Words cannot adequately convey the anger and disappointment I feel after learning about the proba-

## Turfgrass - The Easy Target

### MARK MY WORDS



Mark Jarrell, CGCS

ble additional cuts to the IFAS budget proposed by Gov. Jeb Bush and the Florida Legislature. Twenty years of slow but steady progress building support for the University of Florida's turfgrass program through FGCSA and FTGA activism may be wiped away with the stroke of a pen by the time you are actually reading this. The Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, along with the Turf Mountain and the USGA green built and supported by Florida's golf course superintendents, is likely to be one of the first victims, but certainly not the last.

Here are the figures under consideration. Of the current \$1.3 billion shortfall in state revenues, half is to be cut from education. \$104 million is to come from our state universities. IFAS may receive up to \$7 million in cutbacks, though V.P. Mike Martin hopes that it will end up being no more than \$2 million.

In Dr. Martin's own words, "Coupled with the previous \$2.6 million in cuts received by UF/IFAS at the beginning of this fiscal year, additional deep cuts to the UF/IFAS budget proposed by the House and Senate during the first special session will result in immediate layoffs and facility closures statewide. It might be possible to avoid immediate closures and layoffs if actual new cuts in the second special session do not exceed \$2 million on top of what's already been made. In avoiding immediate closures, UF/IFAS would be in a position this year to begin an orderly transition of reorganization and consolidation of facilities throughout the state. We view

this to be an inopportune time to disinvest in the agricultural and natural resources industries, which are major parts of the state's economy."

While it may seem unpatriotic and irresponsible to criticize our leadership during a state and national crisis, our industry needs to reflect on how Florida's politicians have viewed us since the first big IFAS budget cuts back in 1987 - long before the current emergency. Think of all the initiatives we've championed over the years and the total lack of respect shown and support given by our state government. Agriculture and the green industry, which includes turfgrass, doesn't seem to be important to our representatives in Tallahassee anymore, despite our continued growth and economic value to Florida. Politicians don't seem to understand that Florida's appeal, and the growth it has experienced, is due to its wealth of natural resources. People come to Florida to enjoy its weather, beaches, fishing, wildlife, and golf courses, more than they come for Disney World and Sea World.

IFAS provides the research and education needed for the protection and enhancement of Florida's natural resources. Properly funding IFAS is an investment in Florida's future. What's the old saying? You give a man a fish and he's fed for the day, but if you teach him to fish, he's fed for life. Our elected officials cannot have a clear vision of Florida's future if they do not understand what the bricks and mortar are that make up the foundation of this state's economy.

I'm confident that turf will get high consideration with Mike Martin in charge of IFAS, but these proposed cuts are unbelievably severe. We need to rally behind him to make the best of a bad situation and keep the turfgrass program moving forward. We have too much invested and too much to lose if the program once again falters.

Let's hope that we can somehow come together as an industry - a green industry and not just a golf industry - to map an effective political strategy so that our legislature one day is made up of officials who recognize Florida's true wealth and understand how best to protect it.

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

### This is a call for articles for the 2002 issues of the Florida Green.

Contact Joel D. Jackson, editor for more information. Phone or Fax: 407-248-1971. Email: flgm@aol.com. All slides and photographs should include identification of persons in the picture and the name of the photographer.

**Hands on Topics:** Share your best practices and tips for these upcoming topics. Photographs or slides are encouraged.

Spring 2002 - Managing Summer Stress on Greens

Summer 2002 - The Value of Maintenance Standards and Long Range Planning

Fall 2002 - The Role and Responsibilities of the Equipment Manager

**Spotlight:** People and events making news in Florida. From award winners to chapter tournaments and other accomplishments. Send in your story.

**Superintendents Journal:** Personal observations or experiences related to any phase of the turf management profession including balancing family life with work.

**Professional Development:** General management topics beyond turf. Examples: Education, training, facilities operations, personnel, computers, etc.

**Industry News:** News items of interest to Florida superintendents from allied associations in the turf/horticultural industry.

ture industry.

**Opinion:** Exactly what it means. Article voicing your point of view on any topic concerning Florida superintendents.

**Research:** A section reserved primarily for university and technical authors to report on research results within the industry. Also reports of practical on-course testing.

**Rub of the Green:** Articles and anecdotes with a humorous twist.

**Stewardship:** Superintendents are invited to submit articles and ideas about environmental issues and initiatives at their courses.