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## STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

An accepted premise within today's society is that one should not criticize unless he or she has a better idea. As one who has been consistently critical of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's election process, I accept the responsibility to suggest a better way.

I say this because the present election process, with block chapter voting entirely replacing individual member voting, denies every GCSAA member of his or her opportunity to participate in the association's governing process. (See my column in the January 2007 issue.)

The unavoidable consequence of this is that the membership's natural leaders see this, lose respect for the governing process, and, accordingly, decline board service. Historically, the nominating committee has had to frequently pressure members to consider board service.

Accordingly, the GCSAA's ultimate challenge is to create a political environment that will encourage every member to seek and be proud of service to the association. The only way this is going to happen, however, is for the membership's political power base to stop playing politics and to bring a democratic voting process into play, as generally suggested within the following commentary.

### THE NOMINATION PROCESS

For better or worse, the quality of an elected board will closely correlate with the quality of the nominating process that creates it. Accordingly, the keys to an effective nominating program are:

First and foremost, it's necessary to identify independent, knowledgeable groups that the board would appoint to the nominating committee each year. For example, the following sample group would serve as an effective model to emulate: the second removed GCSAA past president, current directors of the USGA Green Section, 15- to 20-year GCSAA members and qualified academics from the university system.

Next, and still foremost, is the important task of identifying who should serve on the nominating committee itself? Because effective board performance requires nothing less than a blue-ribbon panel to make these critical nominations, the nominating committee might consist of selections from the following categories of industry savvy people:

- the fifth removed GCSAA past president;
- 20- to 30-year GCSAA members;
- five year recent past chapter presidents;
- current and five-year recent members of the GCSAA Advisory Council; and
- 10-year recent past GCSAA board members.

### BOARD ELIGIBILITY

The most effective way to ensure that board candidates possess leadership experience and qualities would be to allow only current

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and past chapter presidents to be eligible to serve on the GCSAA board of directors. Two sources of nominations would be accepted: (1) Chapter boards would be allowed to nominate only their own current or past presidents; and (2) any current or past chapter president would be allowed to nominate him or herself – provided he or she obtained the signatures of 50 percent of all chapter members eligible to vote, as

attested to by the chapter secretary.

All board recommendations would be submitted to the nominating committee in the form of an approximate three-minute electronic video to be prepared by each candidate that would present each candidate's resume, answers to FAQs and campaign initiatives. Chapters would pay up to a fixed amount for the production of their own candidates' videos, while self-nominated candidates would pay up to the same fixed amount to produce their own video productions.

To allow for proper due diligence, all submitted candidate videos would be forwarded electronically to each nominating committee member before the designated committee meeting date in Lawrence, Kan. Once this meeting convenes, the committee would nominate two or three candidates for each of the three board vacancies that occur each year. Final committee nominations would be announced to the general membership via a special purpose GCSAA election Web site that would link to each nominated candidate's video production.

### THE VOTING PROCESS

At this point, candidate voting becomes the simple matter of allowing eligible members to gain one-time access to a national computerized election process via their unique member identification numbers. Officer voting becomes even a simpler task, i.e., the president and officers would be elected each year by the nine board members at their first meeting immediately following the general board elections. This in-house officer election process is used by virtually every one of the over 4,600 private golf clubs throughout the country because it allows the best informed to select the right people for the right job at the right time.

The real issue is whether GCSAA members care enough to vote? If present day indifference to voting continues, members will be denying their profession the recognition it requires to lead an industry while settling for a lifestyle that they will later look back on with some regret. **GCI**