

We'd like to hear from you.

E-mail us at gci@gie.net with your thoughts and opinions.

Waiting for things to even out

I read with interest your May 2010 cover story "In Munis We Trust" (page 20). As co-owner of a family-owned, 18-hole public golf course in Western Massachusetts, established by my parents in 1963, I feel more than qualified to weigh in on this subject. We have six municipal golf courses within a 20-mile radius of our area, each in direct competition with us. My dad built our golf course for the average golfer, with a business philosophy of offering a quality product at a fair price. Our customer base is the average player, providing what Dennis Lyon calls "accessible, affordable, quality golf."

Recently, we have seen some of our local municipals receive benefits that go beyond tax breaks. In 2007 we saw the Ledges Golf Course in South Hadley receive a nearly \$250,000 "Urban Parks" grant from the state to build its new clubhouse. Several years ago, Franconia Golf Course in Springfield received a \$1 million state grant and a matching bond from the city to install an irrigation system. These are just some of the most egregious examples of

what we have to compete against. It sure would be nice to have access to some of these free gifts out here in the private sector.

Mr. Lyon sure was right when he said there are no level playing fields when it comes to competition between golf courses. However,

out here in Western Massachusetts we're still waiting for things to even out.

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Your point

In your article "In Munis We Trust" (May 2010, page 20) you missed a couple of points.

- Muni prices are not break-even prices in most cases; the tax payers foot the bills and have no idea how much they are.
- Muni courses pay no real estate taxes. True.
- Muni courses pay no payroll taxes. True, who does?
- Muni courses pay no insurance. True, who does?
- Muni courses don't pay labor. True, who does?
- Muni courses take away tax base and add to the taxes of private business. True.
- Muni courses can buy equipment at government contract prices. True.

The point here is that muni courses charge way below what the product is worth and they are driving private business out of business. There may not be a level playing field, however that does not mean that government inefficiency, cronyism, corruption, etc., should be running us out of business.

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