

I had the privilege this year of representing the Central Florida GCSA at the 2005 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) Chapter Delegates Meeting in Kansas City, Mo. I came away with two distinct impressions. First, the GCSAA is working hard to structure and position the association to work effectively for the membership and the profession. Second, members can have a significant voice, input and impact on the direction and accomplishments of the GCSAA.

Of course, that means actually participating in the association. It doesn't have to mean service on GCSAA committees, although I strongly recommend that every member toss his or her hat into the ring. You learn a lot and you get to put your two cents into the discussion. It's a funny thing how people can bring preconceived notions to the meeting, and once a wide range of facts, figures and viewpoints are exchanged, consensus can be reached on issues.

You can and should have these same discussions at the local chapter level. At the local level we logically tend to focus on immediate needs almost to the exclusion of the big-picture issues. While meeting sites, speakers, tournaments and fund raisers are all very key to our chapters' function, we also need to spend some time on long-range planning, and the trends in golf and needs of our profession.

That is where the chapter delegate process comes into play. Like your elected representative to Congress, this person can take your chapter's consensus position on the issues of the Professional Development Initiative, marketing the value of GCSAA membership, membership growth and retention, and a host of others to the annual Chapter Delegates Meeting. But I wouldn't wait a whole year to respond to the information your delegate just brought home from the last meeting. Local chapters should go through the agenda, the presentation notes and the published outcomes from this year's meeting.

There is nothing wrong with local chapters drafting letters, memos or e-mails addressing some of the topics that were brought up at this year's meeting. If the rank-and-file members want responsive leadership, then they

## Reviving the People's Power

BY JOEL JACKSON



JUST LIKE OUR  
FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT,  
ASSOCIATION  
GOVERNANCE IS  
NOT ALWAYS  
PERFECT, BUT IT'S  
THE BEST THING  
WE HAVE GOING

need to provide meaningful input to the process. That should be an ongoing process.

There were about 30 percent new faces at the last delegates meeting. How much more effective at relaying GCSAA and local chapter concerns over things like PDI and Class A renewals would they have been if the chapter had sent these folks prepared to provide questions and concerns to the session? On GCSAA's part, the meeting resource book containing the agenda and notes, etc., should be sent to arrive at least a month before the meeting so a chapter has ample time to prepare input on issues.

I know several people like me were last-minute replacements for delegates who had work obligations crop up. This will always be the case in our business, but we can all be better prepared. We are not there to give personal opinions. We are there to represent the consensus position of our chapters.

I'm sure your delegate brought back a few issues that raised a few questions. I know I had mine. Just like our federal government, association governance is not always perfect, but it's the best thing we have going. And just like with the federal government, there will be criticism and fault finding. The squeaky wheel might get the grease, but it will not necessarily change the direction the wagon is heading. To do that, the membership needs to be engaged and provide feedback that will help our association leadership and staff map out the best route to success for all.

We often mount grassroots letter-writing campaigns to our elected officials in Washington over issues affecting the environment. Why not do the same for issues affecting our association? Power to the people.

---

*Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*