

**P**erhaps you've heard the old saying that "silence is consent!" It's true. If you don't take the time to write your legislators at all levels of government on occasion about issues that affect your private property or your profession, the politicians will have no idea what's happening on Main Street, your golf course or your own front yard.

We elect politicians to represent us all — it's a republic, not a democracy. If you don't tell them about your special needs for your private property rights or issues facing golf course management, who will?

In the case of issues, numbers count and hundreds and thousands of letters and e-mails laying out fair, common-sense, science-based positions carry some weight. But it's all for naught unless you write it, stamp it and send it.

We can all sit around and gripe at our local chapter meetings, but until you take the step of writing your commissioner, state senator or U.S. congressperson, you're just spinning your wheels and getting thrown under the bus by activists and bureaucrats who shout "the sky is falling" while the media joins in with shoddy reporting of all sides on an issue.

I'll admit I'm in a constant state of flux trying to balance idealism, realism, optimism and that ever-popular pessimism about the intelligence and honesty of our elected "leaders" and our representative government.

One thing I know is if I don't make the attempt to tell them about what's bugging me and where I think the Environmental Protection Agency and others are off base on some key issues, then I'm not even exercising my rights under our system of governance.

Having been involved in association work now for more than 10 years, I know how hard it is to get members to meetings, much less to write personal letters to their legislators.

Here's a tip I heard from our lobbyist at our last board meeting. He said in lieu of having a Mr. Smith Goes to Washington moment of hundreds of bags of mail being

## Time to Get in a Politician's Ear

BY JOEL JACKSON



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dumped on Congress' doorstep, each chapter should write a letter to each U.S. senator from its state and to the U.S. representative from each chapter's region. Each chapter president and/or the board should sign the letter, as well as list every name of the chapter's members and their golf courses. It's a bit of a proxy letter, but it does highlight the number of people affected by the issue in question.

I might suggest that, when it comes to the House of Representatives, you use a return-address zip code from a member in that congressperson's district, or he or she might toss it in file 13 before opening it.

I know many chapters can have two, three or four congresspeople in their geographic regions. But this can be an effective tool, and is a lot more practical than expecting all 100 members of your chapter to write three letters to Washington.

And I don't believe in, "Do as I say, and not as I do!" I've written my two senators, and guess who my congressman is? He's none other than the honorable Alan Grayson of "Republicans Want You to Die Quickly Fame." But I told Grayson of my concerns about the EPA's WaterSense Program and what I thought of how the agency has handled the phase-out of methyl bromide. I also gave him some facts about turfgrass environmental benefits and golf's economic impact on Florida.

Won't you find a few minutes to exercise your rights? Speak up for yourself and your profession!

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*Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson is Executive Director of the Florida GCSA. Jackson is also known for speaking up for his industry's rights.*