

Sometimes, I think we're a nation of too many opinions. We Americans have an opinion for everything, whether we're asked for it or not.

I know, I know — our nation is founded on free speech. And I *am* a proponent of the First Amendment.

My point is that too many of us voice our opinions just because we feel like we need to be part of the conversation. And some of the stuff that comes out of our mouths is just plain wrong, or stupid or both. We're all guilty of it — from the guy at the corner bar to the politician in Washington.

And while we're on it, let's talk about politics for a minute. I can't wait for Jan. 20, the day that Barack Obama becomes president. Because that's also the day that George W. Bush leaves the White House.

I'm glad Bush is out of there because I'm sick and tired of the Bush bashing, especially in the past four years. A Jay Leno joke here and an editorial cartoon there didn't bother me. Bush, after all, was the most public of all public figures. The jokes and criticism come with the territory.

I realize that Bush made some big mistakes. Still, the bashing that went on was not constructive. It was ugly at times. Real ugly.

And this wickedness scares me.

We've become very divided in the past 10 years in this country. We're staunch and proud Republicans; we're staunch and proud Democrats. Problem is that many of us are so staunch and proud that we lose our inhibitions.

Hey, I'm all for a spirited debate between Republicans and Democrats on important issues. This is how the government should get things done. What I'm not for, however, is the extreme partisanship of both parties, which can sometimes border on the ridiculous. This is not how to act to get things done.

I'm also disturbed by political bashing that doesn't have much basis. Obama hasn't even taken office, and right-wingers are already saying the world is going to end. I've heard it from our readers, who are largely Republicans. Many of you think our country and our industry is in

Let's Give Obama A Fair Chance

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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real trouble with Obama and the Democratic-powered Congress in charge. As one superintendent put it in a reader survey we conducted about last November's election, "If Obama wins, we're in BIG TROUBLE!" Incidentally, another reader responded, "If there is a God, McCain will win."

From an industry perspective, I realize that Obama and Congress have an environmental agenda that could impact how the golf course maintenance industry operates. The reason I wrote this month's cover story was to examine those possibilities. Obama and Congress are said to be bent on passing some environmental legislation that correspond with their "green" views. But it's the golf course maintenance industry's job to educate Obama and Congress that it is an environmental friend, not a foe. You do a great job of this inside the walls of our own industry, but you need to do it on the outside.

But back to the point: political bashing. Let's not just write off Obama as a liberal fanatic who would rather let turf disease kill your course (and eventually your course's business) than treat it with fungicides. Let's give him a chance.

I'd like to leave you with some words of wisdom from a very capable golf course superintendent. Several weeks ago, I asked you for your thoughts on Obama winning the election. Here's how Matt Shaffer, superintendent of Merion (Pa.) Golf Club, responded: "He wasn't my candidate of choice, but he is my president, and I'm rooting for his success. He has a lot of problems to solve, and I pray for his success as well as his safety."

No matter our political stance, we should all feel how Shaffer feels.

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