



ELECTION YEAR POLITICS

By Rod Johnson

A most important national election is presently on our minds, and if not on our minds, definitely on our television sets. By November 3, most of us will be sick and tired of the whole political scene and resolve to remain neutral or inactive. This distaste for television politics has led many of us down a road of apathy toward professional organization involvement and/or "politics" as it may be.

Every year is an election year for GCSAA. At the upcoming GCSAA annual meeting, to be held in January in Anaheim, consideration will be given to some structural changes outside of the normal election of officers. These changes will involve major changes to the existing GCSAA bylaws.

The proposed changes are basically in three areas-voting procedures, dues approval procedures, and the authority to set membership requirements. Each area is significant and I will attempt to explain why I am in support of the changes.

VOTING PROCEDURES: Presently 99% of the voting at GCSAA annual meetings is done by chapter appointed delegates. I have served as chapter delegate for the past 8 years and for the most part have enjoyed the process.

The GCSAA Board of Directors and involved committees are recommending that the association discontinue delegate voting and institute a new system of individual voting. The democratic "one person, one vote" process would be implemented through a choice of "on-site" or "mail-in" voting. The doors of opportunity for more participation of individual members of GCSAA will be opened by this change.

It is my belief that the present delegate voting system is outdated. It was put into place at a time when travel by GCSAA members was difficult and limited to a few. Communication between individual members was also limited. Today the delegate voting system breeds apathy. GCSAA members are being excluded and some are being intimidated by the fear of being

"politically incorrect". GCSAA is an organization of individuals, not an organization of local chapters.

This change in the voting procedure will require a two-thirds vote of all members present and voting or represented by delegates or proxies at the 1993 annual meeting.

Most delegates realize that they are being asked to vote themselves out of a job that they have diligently filled. Some of them for many years. The long term good of the group hangs in the balance. Ultimately the result of the vote may lie within the ability of all delegates to perform a self examination to define what is personal gratification and what is for the good of the Association. I continue to be uncomfortable with the potential of larger chapters controlling the destiny of our profession. Again GCSAA is an organization of individuals.

DUES APPROVAL PROCEDURES: Present GCSAA bylaws state that the annual dues shall be the sum fixed at any annual meeting of the Association as approved by the members present. Delegate and proxy voting is prohibited.

This system is also outdated. Dues adjustments are often dependent on the "politics" of the time rather than upon sound business and fiscal realities.

It is being proposed that the Board be allowed to set the dues for all membership classes. On the surface this surrender may seem frightening. Thoughts race to unchecked spending and huge dues increases. Even more absurd thinking draws images of GCSAA becoming an ultra high priced organization for the elitely employed.

The surface view does not tell the story. Examination of all GCSAA revenue sources reveals the reality that only 22% of gross revenue comes from membership dues. The elected leadership of GCSAA is already entrusted with the control of the majority of funds and has shown its responsibility. They have overseen the growth of membership equity from \$300,000 in 1983 to over \$5.5 million in 1991. It is hard to imagine that an

elected board of directors would not have the ability to prudently utilize discretion over the total revenue picture.

AUTHORITY TO SET MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS: Currently membership classification schemes are defined in the bylaws requiring approval of two-thirds majority to change. We need to ensure that the standards for GCSAA membership are kept high and that each member receives recognition for his education, experience and skills. If it is our intention that as our profession changes and as employment demands increase that the standards and qualifications for membership keep pace, then the board of directors should be empowered to define those standards.

There is clearly a need to define and adopt non-superintendent membership classifications. GCSAA has done a great job of attracting and retaining the membership of superintendents from private 18 hole facilities. We need to be able to offer programs and services within a dues structure which will attract smaller budget clubs, public golf, golf course staff, officials and so on, because they too have education, recognition, and communication needs. If GCSAA doesn't attempt to meet those needs someone else will. If that happens, that someone else will be determining where golf course superintendents go professionally. I would prefer that GCSAA offer the perspective to which these groups are exposed.

The board needs the authority to set membership requirements and categories in order to react in a timely manner. The presently required two-thirds majority at an annual meeting and the ever present "politics" does not allow for the board to conduct business in a timely manner.

The bottom line is that if we can accept change our organization can grow stronger and therefore each individual member stands to gain significantly as a professional.

GCSAA needs to be operated as the big business it is. The board of directors, duly elected by every individual member, needs to be empowered and entrusted with the authority to conduct business. We need not concern ourselves with a perceived lack of control. We will always have the ultimate check and balance that is in who we elect to serve.