



Gary Grigg and Bruce Williams  
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Dear Gary and Bruce,

Thanks for your letter of September 8, 1995. It appears elsewhere in THE GRASS ROOTS so that our readers can benefit from it. I was glad for the clarifications it contained.

It is unfortunate, or so it seems to me, that it takes a hard nosed editorial to find out what is going on with our national organization and to engage in a more widespread discussion of an important issue.

I think you flatter yourselves to an excess when you at least imply that GCSAA members know all about these pending affiliation requirements. Trust me—most do not. And likely many do not care, one way or another. But the MYOB editorial generated 27 contacts with me—telephone calls and letters. Many were even from out of state. And every one but your letter expressed shock by and opposition to the affiliation requirements, especially the required dual membership. One of the letters in opposition was written by a GCSAA Distinguished Service Award recipient.

Reprinting your letter here will help you. It clarifies several points, which begs the question: why does GCSAA seem to sugar coat what they suspect will be controversial issues instead of just laying the facts out, as you did in your letter? Glossy, snazzy happy news with a professional PR twist to it leaves the impression you are trying to hide something. Usually you are not, so just give us the facts sans the editorial frosting.

As I have stated before, I am in favor of affiliation. I am opposed to some of the requirements however. The most significant developments in the past month have been the compromises coming forth. As soon as the 100% requirement is removed or modified, I will become a champion of the effort. Since the percentage is arbitrary, it should be brought down to a reasonable level for most chapters, or the deadline for 100% should be removed entirely. It is conceivable, for example, that a grandfathered individual, aged 20, could keep a chapter from 100% dual membership for half a century, proof that requiring 100% compliance is in name only.

Several other things need further clarification. Your explanation of the legal situation, on the surface, makes sense. But before turning the GCSAA/state chapter relationship on its head, I would like to know how many lawsuits have been filed through a state chapter to GCSAA in the last 50 years? A dozen? A hundred? One? None?

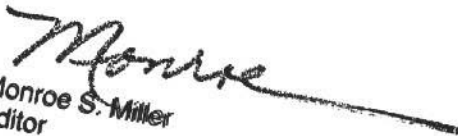
If the answer is none, then is the legal opinion the changes are predicated on available to members? Maybe our chapter attorney would like to read it. I do know that we cannot, in our society, operate on a basis of fear of legal action. Nothing would get done.

Your letter failed to answer a question lots of us have—will there be chapter dues in addition to individual dues? There hadn't better be; they would only sap money from more important matters, like turfgrass research. Chapter finances in most cases are already stretched without having to pay for some new bureaucracy. If you want people to buy into an idea or a program, then you need to offer details. Trying to sell these requirements with trite phrases like "strengthen the profession" and "improve cooperation between the national and the chapters" need some explanation. We might actually have some good ideas that will help. But when you offer no details, it seems you only want a major flow of money from the chapters to Lawrence, money many do not have. No wonder there is opposition. You need to tell individuals how they will benefit. Can you tell them that they can expect to make more money? Details matter a lot.

In the correspondence you sent to me, you went to great lengths ("bottoms up discussion", "coast to coast", "border to border") to convince me how carefully these requirements were considered. The requirement of GCSAA membership to be eligible for chapter membership will have its greatest impact on small budget courses. How many of your committee members are from 9-hole courses? How many of your committee members pay their own dues year in and year out? How many of your committee members have a golf course operating budget of \$100,000 (not fungicide budget—total operating budget) or less? I am not certain, but as I look at the roster I do not see the people who will be most affected represented by someone in their circumstances. Why don't you seem to understand that for some golf course superintendents, the issue is money—they cannot afford to belong to both. Period. I hate to see them left out entirely and have to believe that they are better off if they are at least in a state chapter.

Finally, your attitude that just because some people aren't GCSAA members they are "riding on our coattails" is petty as far as I am concerned. Mark Kienert refers to them in his chapter relations report as "welfare", and he is just as wrong. Using that logic, those in a church congregation who are not able to contribute as much to the collection plate as others are mooches and relegated to the back pews of the church. Does that mean those in a community who pay low taxes should only drive the back streets, limit their kids' access to public school programs and be viewed as second class citizens? Of course not. Some people cannot afford what you and I have; that includes some golf course superintendents. Because they have less does not mean that they are somehow "less" for that. I just cannot believe that either of you really feels that way, and wish you hadn't said it in your letter. And I wish our new chapter president hadn't either. We have a list of contributors in the NOER Turfgrass Research Facility, and the results of the good science that goes on there is for everybody, in Wisconsin and across the country, not just the contributors who built it. We certainly do not view those who were unable to contribute or chose not to as "riding on our coattails."

Just as you do not doubt my sincere concern for the best of the profession, I do not doubt yours. I have enormous respect for individuals who take the time to dedicate themselves to it to the extent you two have. We are simply in the process of sorting out the details on this issue in search of the best way to get to the same end. As always, you can pick up the phone and call me. Better yet, we will see you at the Symposium in Milwaukee in early November.

  
Monroe S. Miller  
Editor