

An Open Letter to WGCSA Members:

Af-fil-i-ate, verb. The American Collegiate Dictionary defines this as "to associate (oneself) as a member."

This is the much discussed topic between the GCSAA leadership and its members. By the end of the year, all of us who are concerned about this issue will be sick of hearing about it.

My first concerns about affiliation centered around fairness in dual membership requirements. I dwelled on this issue in my mind but something was nagging at me about how this whole reaffiliation thing came to pass. After much reflection, talking with other superintendents and reading commentary in various publications, it is quite obvious that the biggest issue in the whole matter is power and control.

Hal Phillips, editor of *Golf Course News*, in his February 1996 column defines the issue quite specifically as just that—power and control. In my mind, this was an issue hatched by some GCSAA insiders and advanced very cleverly. In the world of politics they would be congratulated for having done a magnificent job of greasing the path of their cause.

Issues such as this, which have far reaching impacts on the way the GCSAA, WGCSA and members of the two organizations interact, need much debate and membership input before they come before the GCSAA board and are adopted. But, as Hal Phillips points out, "Debate" was non-existent from the membership until the issue was a done deal.

The pawns in this greased system to slide dual membership past the members were the chapter delegates. Due to apathy from most members and a desire to expedite decision making at the national level, the chapter delegates system has been in effect to handle communication with the GCSAA board. Manipulation of chapter delegates for the election purposes and other issues is nothing new. It is pure politics to manipulate the chapter delegates and it has been done to some degree for years. To advance the reaffiliation agreement, the GCSAA board and insiders merely manipulated the chapter delegates into passing reaffiliation. Then they very quickly adopted it to avoid debate and hopefully make it appear to any questioning members that the issue was unanimously accepted and discussion closed.

At our March WGCSA meeting we dwelled on the issue of dual membership and what we are getting from the national in return for accepting reaffiliation. The issue, however, is bigger than dual membership. We are talking about a massive change in how we do business as a state chapter. We may not see it because we, as current members, are grandfathered and our apathetic nature to GCSAA issues says "it doesn't affect me so why be concerned?"

But we must take a few minutes, all of us, to pay closer attention to the long term ramifications of this. Look closely at what the GCSAA is saying that we gain from affiliation. One will see that we gain nothing. It is less than smoke and mirrors.

Look past dual membership. This is a power grab in a very subtle, politically astute way. It is imperative that we all very closely examine this and make sure in each of our minds we understand what is going to happen to our state association in the long term.

It was stated by someone at our March meeting that because this was a done deal and the majority of the chapter delegates passed this, we might as well just accept the fact that it was going to happen and we might as well get on the bandwagon.

Such an attitude is pure nonsense. Where would we be as a democracy if people did not examine issues? We are not a bunch of sheep being led to pasture.

In the fall when we reexamine reaffiliation to make a decision on it for the WGCSA, we must remember how the issue was orchestrated and how it will affect us long term. We must not be afraid to break ranks if that is best for the WGCSA. Just because the majority have passively acquiesced to this, we must not be afraid to do what is right. We need to have a backbone and stand up for what is right. That is pure and simple "leadership" in my book.

Sincerely,

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