



RESTLESS IN MADISON

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Since I started receiving THE GRASS ROOTS about a year ago, I have made it a habit to read the entire publication from front to back. In review of these articles, I have found that some provide enlightening words, some provide research data, and others are written to provide a spark for some change, and that is why I am writing you today.

It has recently come to my attention that the Vice Meyer position is no longer. This information was provided to me by two high ranking officials within the University System. So what does this mean for the turfgrass industry? The way I see it, this is adding salt to an open wound. But, as a University employee I have no say in the matter, so I am asking the members of the turfgrass industry to voice their opinion.

In the time that I have been here I have not seen any recent figures on the condition of the turfgrass industry within the state. However when comparing this state's turfgrass industry to those of other states I would have to say that it is at least a \$1 billion a year industry. With this in mind I feel that it would be very hard for the State Legislators to say no to such a lucrative supply of tax dollars. Yes, I said State Legislation. I know that this is a dirty word to some, but everybody's worst fears have come true.

The state government is placing its resources on K-12 education, tax relief, and the prison system. Where is the University System in the plan for the state? Over the next year the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences may have nine retirements. Also, during the next year only two faculty positions may be released, and the College's agenda gives priority to positions with major teaching appointment, which the Vice Meyer position does not include. So what is the next turn?

With conversation with members of the WTA board, I have found that their by-laws prohibit them from lobbying. As for the WGCSA, I am not sure. But, something has to be done before the University and legislature feels that the Wisconsin Turfgrass Industry can do without such a position. Yes, the TDDL can provide diagnosis and conduct field trials, but we are in a society with negative views of our industry. For this to change we need to provide research that can help reduce chemical input through the implementation of new pest management practices. Without such a position this research is neglected.

So what can be done. Their are probably two possibilities that I can think of. One is that the state redirects some funds to pay for the cost of the position. I don't think hell froze over yet! Another possibility is to establish a

check-off system that Dr. D. Maxwell proposed at the Expo last year. With a check off system the ultimate consumers would help pay for the needed turfgrass research. It could be set up in such a fashion that a few cents or a fraction of a cent can be charged for every round of golf, every square yard of sod sold, or every acre of turf fertilized. With such a system the consumer, not the sellers, would pay for the research. With such a system enough money would be raised to support a turf pathology position and additional money for other entities of turfgrass research.

These are only suggestions and may not be the right answer, but I hope the take home message is that something needs to be done, as this situation will not rectify itself. With a united turfgrass industry I feel that our legislators would be hard pressed not to listen. ♣

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