

Keep Informed And Keep Involved

By Don Bretthauer
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As manager of government relations at GCSAA headquarters, I try to keep up-to-date on state legislation that will affect superintendents. Superintendents across the country play an important part by informing me of recent state legislative developments. Keep it up!

Although GCSAA headquarters is quite active in submitting comments on regulations and legislation at the national level, it's up to state groups and individuals to do so at the state level. Today, many important environmental enforcement activities and regulatory matters are being delegated to state governments and agencies by federal agencies. This fact makes it especially important for your chapter to keep informed of state legislation and regulations and for you to keep involved with the legislative process so that you have a voice in state government decisions.

Target State Legislative Committees

All state legislatures, except Nebraska's, are bicameral. Bicameral legislatures, as you probably know, consist of a house and a senate, each with its own committee structure. Most state legislative bodies usually have both an agricultural committee and an environment committee that may introduce legislation that will directly affect your operations.

Your chapter needs to identify the chairs of these important committees and keep in touch with them or one of their staff members. The better the rapport and consistency of contact, the better the chance your chapter will have to submit comments and to participate in hearings.

You might circulate a roster of the members of relevant committees at your next chapter meeting so that golf courses can initiate contact with local representatives who serve on these important committees. It is important to inform these committees about what a superintendent does, the level of professional and educational expertise that most superintendents hold and, most importantly, the differences between applications of pesticides to golf courses as compared to agriculture and lawn care.

Keep Informed

Stay alert and keep informed. If you find an article in your local newspaper concerning state legislation that affects superintendents, make sure you inform the appropriate officer within your state or local chapter. (Most of your associations have government relations liaisons and you can keep these individuals informed.) If you are a GR liaison, you may want to consider subscribing to the major newspaper of the capital city in your state. Often this newspaper will carry state legislative developments when others won't. Many states also have a legislative services division that provides legislative updates for free or for a small charge; some even have a toll-free hotline.

Stay Active

Even if you are not an officer or government relations liaison for your local chapter, there are still many things that you can do to get involved. Start by writing your state representatives and senators, introducing yourself and offer them information about your course. Tell them about your local or state chapter organization—not only about how many members it has, but also about how many golf club members your association's members indirectly represent. In addition, many state legislators have newsletters that you can receive.

Find out if any state legislators or their staff members belong to your club or golf at your course. After clearing permission with your green committee or other appropriate officials, introduce yourself and let them know what you do and how your chapter has been involved in state issues.

It Takes Time and Patience

Those of you who have participated in state government realize that it takes time to make a difference. You may lose more battles than you win, especially at first. However, if you don't keep informed and stay involved, you may not ever have a chance to get into the fight.

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