

California GCSA Government Relations News

BY JIM HUSTING, CGCS

This is our first article (in hopefully a series!) updating the Nor Cal membership to the government relations work we are involved with for the California GCSA. I will start this series off for now, but eventually someone else will continue on following in my footsteps.

Currently, the California GCSA has formed a “new” Government Relations Committee as I am about to officially resign my chairmanship of some 13 years. The Government Relations Committee is currently composed of me, Jim Ferrin, CGCS, Kevin Breen, CGCS, Jim Alwine, Kevin Friesen, CGCS, Rafael Barrajas, CGCS, and Stuart Rowland. Most all of the six California GCSA chapters are represented and as the process moves forward I am quite confident that these individuals will do a great job.

The California GCSAA Government Relations Committee monitors legislation emanating out of Sacramento and also responds to the different regulatory agencies that affect our profession. We work closely with lobbyist George Steffes and Dennis Loper of Capitol Partners. George has been advising us on the different issues over the years, and now Dennis is eventually going to take over George’s role. Both George and Dennis are golf enthusiasts. Their love of the game has brought them to us and vice versa. Our relationship is one of mutual respect and I have had the pleasure to see George in action on our behalf many times. This relationship that we have is quite unique in that there are not many GCSAA chapters that even have a lobbyist. The California GCSA realizes this and will continue to benefit from this relationship as the years progress. Quite frankly, and I am a bit prejudiced, but it is the most important benefit that the local state chapters receive from the state organization. Without us, you would go it alone in the government relations arena.

Currently, we are monitoring some 40 bills that have been introduced this year in Sacramento. They range from pesticide usage, to water usage and reporting as well as a myriad of others. This includes just about anything that we feel our membership and profession needs to know. The bills are generated by Susie Steffes, George’s daughter, from a system that we formed some 13 years ago with the appropriate buzzwords. From there, legislation is

reviewed and the committee decides which bills to monitor and watch as they migrate from the various committees and legislative chambers. If there is a particular bill or regulation we feel needs to be announced, the CGCSA Government Relations Network sends out an e-mail notice to all those members on the Network. Many of you are on that Network and do receive those notices. Currently the Network numbers well over 400 industry members from all around the state, so notices do get out there. This is a “grassroots” network and sometimes it requires a response. Legislators do take notice when one of their constituents responds to an issue...so yes; you do and can make a difference.

We are also monitoring very closely, and have responded to a California DPR proposed new regulation concerning pesticide applications near surface waters of the State. This one is a biggy! The California GCSA, with the help of GCSAA, drafted a response to this proposal and we actually got a personal audience with the officials from DPR about these proposed regulations. There may not be anything we can do about these proposed regulations, but at least they now know who we are. The CGCSA GR Committee will continue to respond to DPR as the regulations have not been officially adopted yet. If they are adopted, look for some very strict restrictions on certain pesticides that golf courses are currently using. These would most certainly include some type of “buffer zones” along waterways, which the DPR interprets as any stream, river, pond, lake, ditch etc.etc.

Well, I hope I have not been too boring in this first California GCSA GR Update! It has been too long since I have written anything to inform this chapter on just what I have been doing these past 13 years. I apologize for that. I am excited however, that what has been established in the past will continue on into the future. The individuals that have volunteered to carry on the CGCSA GR Committee and Network are fine professionals and individuals! We will continue on in the government relations arena to represent our profession in the best way possible. Until next article, stay involved and be vigilant!

