

# LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

## Lobbyist says to keep those cards and letters (to legislators) coming

**PLCAA passes the hat and prepares for Feb. 24-25 'Day on the Hill' pilgrimage to meet with Washington, D.C. legislators.**

■ Josephine "Jo" Cooper says the lawn care industry, this past year, finally joined the real world. Got in step. Became part of the process.

She's referring to the political process.

Cooper, a small woman with a soft southern voice, is founder and senior principal of Capitoline International Group, Ltd., an issues management firm located in Washington D.C. It's the lobbying firm that the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) employed to chart its course on Capitol Hill this past year.

"PLCAA decided that rather than simply responding and waiting for things to be done to you, the organization would become very much more active," says Cooper.

Active? Indeed. After Cooper delivered the keynote address at PLCAA's 1991 Convention at Tampa in November, outgoing PLCAA president Neal DeAngelo, like a tent revivalist rattling a collection plate, commanded PLCAA directors to the speaking hall doors to collect the pledges of departing listeners.

There were no other exits.

This level of legislative/regulatory earnestness has characterized PLCAA ever since word got out this past mid-spring that several U.S. Senators had drafted



**Josephine Cooper helping PLCAA make some friends on Capitol Hill**

national lawn care legislation. PLCAA, which represents about 1,000 lawn care companies, has, since then, been exhorting members to:

**1)** on one hand, give money to its Federal Issues Management Fund and

**2)** on the other hand, become acquainted, vocal and—at least—recognizable to their legislators—on all levels.

The national legislation that ignited this flurry is dormant, maybe dead.

The PLCAA exhortations for members' money and time on behalf of legislative matters have only increased, though. These calls literally rose to a wail with the June 1991 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that any of the nation's 80,000 political subdivisions can—if they don't conflict with federal or state laws—draft their own pesticide use regulations.

Cooper says PLCAA is on the right

track by demonstrating to legislators that it's not inflexible, that it accepts "reasonable regulation" and sensibly drafted notification and right-to-know laws.

She also makes these points about today's legislative/regulatory climate:

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is unloved and untrusted by just about everyone and will increasingly see its mandate as more regulations and increased enforcement.

- The media will intensify its coverage of environmental issues. "Most of the reporters involved with environmental issues are not so much objective journalists anymore as they are advocates," says Cooper.

- The environmental activist community, and much of the public, is convinced some of the products on the market shouldn't be there. They wouldn't be available, these critics feel, if the EPA did its job properly.

- Most legislators don't know very much about the lawn care industry nor, probably, about pesticides. "We found that some very limited anecdotal situations, specific situations, formed the legislation that had been drafted, were driving that legislation," says Cooper.

With 23 years experience in environmental matters, some of it with the EPA and as a staffer on Capitol Hill, Cooper says that she's convinced that calls and letters from constituents to legislators do sway legislative opinion.

She also urges PLCAA members to participate in its "Day on the Hill" activities in Washington, D.C. Feb. 24-25.

—Ron Hall

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