

NEWS+VIEWS

GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS

Obama election driven by economy

BY DAVID FRABOTTA

As the economic recession drags on, Americans are desperate for economic leadership. Ever since Herbert Hoover, Americans have used the resident of the Oval Office as a scapegoat for economic woes.

Former President George Bush, fairly or unfairly, might take the brunt of the criticism for our most-recent woes, but the people will look to President Barack Obama to lead us through the trouble.

Hoover, of course, had the unfortunate timing of taking the oath of office less than a year before the stock market crash of 1929. By 1933, stock prices were down 80% from their highs in 1929, which opened the door for a fiscally minded challenger. Franklin Roosevelt was an effective persuader and exhilarating speaker, who had the ability to reassure Americans the Great Depression would soon come an end.

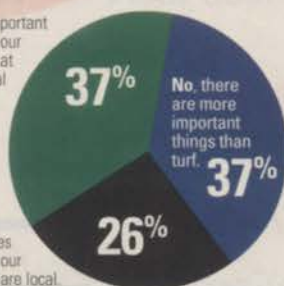
America's economy is in tumultuous times once again, and Green Industry members appear to have voted with their pocketbooks, according to our 2008 Election survey.

Housing foreclosures continue to send a frightening ripple through the banking sector, and jobs data is taking its toll on consumer confidence and spending. Though the rate of increase

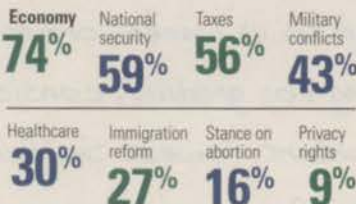
Do turfgrass maintenance issues affect your federal voting preferences?

Yes, it's important to address our profession at the national level.

No, most of the issues that affect our profession are local.



What federal issues help dictate your candidate of choice? (please choose three answers)



in foreclosures has slowed in recent months, the overall number of foreclosures continues to climb.

The loss of manufacturing in many Rust Belt states helped fuel much of the country's economic downturn and job losses. And their struggling status has been a reason for concern for economists and superintendents alike.

So it's no wonder that three-quarters of respondents to our 2008 Election survey say they based their voting decisions on who would be best for the economy.

The economy was the most important federal issue for 74% of respondents, followed by national security (59%), taxes (56%) and military conflicts (43%).

Sixty-three percent of respondents said turfgrass maintenance issues do not influence their federal voting preferences, while 37% said it was important to address turfgrass maintenance issues, such as worker availability and chemical regulations, at the national level. Making up the 63% who do not vote on professional issues, 37% said there are more important things than turfgrass, and 26% said most turf maintenance issues are local.

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WORD ON THE STREET



"Based on what I read and the opinions of the companies in my peer group and of a well-known oil executive in Denver I have a relationship with, we think gas will be sub-\$2 per gallon throughout 2009. We are keenly focused on reducing our fuel consumption by, among other tactics, efficiently routing of all of our work, re-evaluating the kind of equipment we use, and trying to travel during off-peak times."
— Tom Fochtman, co-owner and vice president for Denver-based CoCal Landscape



"We expect economic and market pressures to stabilize gas prices in 2009. This should reduce our fuel costs and help stabilize the prices for other oil-based commodities such as PVC piping and fertilizer. This certainly will be a welcome change from the wild swings we have seen the past few years. However, this does not take the pressure off. There are plenty of people chasing less work."
— Todd Williams, vice president of Littleton, CO-based American Civil Constructors



"Demand for fuel is down worldwide and will continue to be. Gas prices will continue to decrease in light of the current economic recession. Fuel represents 2% to 3% of our cost of goods sold, therefore, decreasing fuel prices could add a few percentage points to our bottom line. But it alone will not turn around the business. It will only lighten the burden and price wars going on in our industry."
— Joe Gonzalez, president and owner of Venice, FL-based ArtisTree Nursery Landscape Maintenance & Design

Great American Cleanup sets record



Volunteers help reconstruct a park ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup campaign to clean-up and green-up communities in all 50 states, resulted in a record 48,000-plus gardens, green spaces and xeriscapes created in 2008.

"The impact of more than 48,000 gardens nationwide is wonderful to imagine," said Matthew M. McKenna, president and CEO of Keep America Beautiful Inc. "Every one of these public spaces could be providing a quiet place to reflect on nature, food for the community, a gateway for the neighborhood, an activity space for

kids, or even an offset to a community's carbon footprint. We are incredibly thankful to all the volunteers and partners who made this possible."

The movement to create gardens in 2008 involved public-private partnerships between businesses and governments at national, state and local levels. One such partnership involves The Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., which has provided 47 grants to Keep America Beautiful affiliates to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces and community gardens since 2005. This year, Scotts Miracle-Gro also supported a national campaign to educate consumers about the importance of conserving water.

"Green spaces and community gardens provide numerous benefits to our environment and neighborhoods, from protecting our water, to providing a place for relaxation and recreation," said Rich Shank, chief environmental officer for Scotts Miracle-Gro.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT ...

Child Labor ... 25 Years Ago

In 1984 the United States Patent and Trademark Office issued U.S. Patent No. 4,455,816 for the below-pictured Pedal-Operated Mower. Who needs H2-B visas when we can harness youngsters' boundless energy while eliminating engine noise and fuel expenditures? Luckily for children and landscapers across America, this invention pedaled nowhere fast.



PHOTO COURTESY: KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL; ILLUSTRATION COURTESY: UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE



Photo Courtesy of Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi, U.S. Air Force

Christmas Decor Congratulates Franchise Owner Phil Fogarty For His Achievement

All of us throughout the Christmas Decor organization offer our sincere congratulations to Phil Fogarty for receiving PLANET's Lifetime Leadership Award. Phil, we gratefully appreciate your service and dedication to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country who now rest at Arlington National Cemetery. Your philanthropic spirit is an inspiration to us all.

