

## ALL PAC'ed?

*If you don't have a seat at the table, you are probably on the menu”  
Nate Garvis, V/P. Target Corporation*

We've all got something to say and the right to say it. We come from all over the globe and no two voices sound the same. But most would agree we need this mix because it strengthens our republic. The more ideas expressed, the better the democracy. The only problem is our leaders have to make sense of it all in order to run things. How to sort out the voices?

Life would be much easier if we could just pick up the phone, call our legislators and bestow upon them the benefit of our good judgment. After all, PAA members know better than anyone else what it takes to run an apartment community. They are in the trenches of property management. They fill vital housing needs while taking on enormous risk. They somehow keep their properties financially sound despite the expensive government regulations imposed upon them. We should have to do nothing more than simply tell government officials about our problems.

If any of us ever finds a way to develop that kind of political clout, we can all quit our day jobs. It would be great if life were that easy.

The competition for our politicians' time and attention is fierce. Everybody is in the game. Legislators hear from all kinds of groups and there is at least one organization to represent every side of any human enterprise. Politicians are bombarded with conflicting views, and, if we are not careful, those who are against us will spread misinformation about us. If we want our particular voice to be heard above the rest and to keep the record straight, we have to invest in the way we deliver our distinctive message.

What's more, our message has to come from a collective voice. One person's concerns will not be taken as seriously as the voice of a group. As in everything else, there is strength in numbers. Legislators serve the public. Statements made by groups whose members have industry experience will carry more weight. We must travel in PACs, if you'll pardon the pun. A collective voice will have more influence, but you can't have a collective voice without one very necessary element. The collective voice cannot be created without money.

Yes, the “M” word. The not so secret ingredient. The stuff that dreams are made of. Contributing to campaigns, fundraisers. Sending information, telling our story. Collective money. PAC money.

For the uninitiated, PAC stands for Political Action Committee. We have one for state issues. We contribute to another, the NAA PAC, for national issues. They are both important.

Don't think of it as a negative. PAC's allow us to educate our legislators and open the door for us to participate in the democratic process. In fact, our founding fathers wanted it this way. Our federal and state constitutions guarantee our right to assemble and petition our government.

Like it or not, liberty and equality naturally create factions, or special interests. We have to expect differences of opinion. And we have to expect those who share an interest will work together. The cure for eliminating factions would be to eliminate liberty. Nobody wants that. Special interests provide ideas, information, and technical expertise to our legislators. James Madison said it best, "Self interest is the engine of government."

No body is talking about abusing the system, or conducting our lobbying activities through illegal and unethical tactics. Our efforts have always been and will always be devoted to communicating, teaching, and negotiating. We value our well deserved reputation as a law-abiding authoritative voice for our industry. It is our belief that education and communication are the backbone of any effective lobbying program.

But make no mistake, our foes are hard at work fighting for their own cause and discrediting ours. Their interests will be advanced at our expense. We need to keep strengthening our presence in Harrisburg, Washington and our own backyards. We need the resources to communicate the facts and convince our legislators to support our issues. We need to have a well funded PAC.

Feel free to contact Christine at [cgertz@aagp.com](mailto:cgertz@aagp.com) for further information.