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Trustee Line for December 20, 2006

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From The Trustees

Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.

In response to Joe B and Liz N's November submission to the Trustee Line:

I went back and reviewed the BOR minutes that they were referring to the Lifeliners-- How many contributors and how much, and the fact that California exceeds the total of six other states combined....With all due respect to these two long-standing members of GA, I do not see the suggestion that the BOR is conducting a contest. It is merely a statement of fact that the state of California is big, but more importantly, appear to have a very active GA membership. It is also probably true that becoming a Lifeliner is not pushed at meetings in the other states, although I do hear the 'plug' for Lifeliners at the numerous meetings that we have here in Las Vegas (about 89 meetings a week).

I cannot speak for any other Trustee, but shame on you if you are NOT a Lifeliner. I am proud to be a Lifeliner and the amount of money sent in each month is a 'drop in the bucket' to what I would spend while gambling.

Sincerely, Karen L. - Area 3

Now that the BOR has approved the cost for the new HOTLINE, (\$1,600 per month for 2 yrs.. \$38,400) and the Trustees allocated \$9,000 to upgrade the GA website, we are going to need MONEY. With the Trustee agendas and the minutes of the BOR meetings now being posted on the Trustee website, which has been proven to save time and money, why !!!!!!!!!!!!! can't we also have the Bulletin printed each month on the site. Karen stated in the BOR minutes of 7/21/2006 meeting, that 'Bulletins are printed monthly at an average cost of \$4,800', plus shipping cost both domestic and foreign, that to me adds up to over \$57,000, per year. By publishing the Bulletin each month on the website, that money saved would pay for the cost of the Hotline as well as the upgrading of the GA website, and with the balance left over can help areas that may not be able to afford the new cost of the Hotline. Each room and area can download the Bulletin and print as many copies as they need.

Joe B. - Area 6C

PS.....hey Karen, no more stuffing those damn envelopes!

Dear Fellow Trustees,

I would like to add my 2-cents worth to the comments made by Karen L, Area 3, in the November issue of the Trustee Line.

First, I agree totally that, for some reason, we seem overly concerned with what I consider very minor changes to the Combo Book. As to items 17 and 18 of the proposed agenda, my response is "How important is it?" Will changing these words have any real impact on the message sent in the sections? I believe they will not. Consequently, I believe and hope that they will be voted down with little or no discussion. (Actually, I'd like to see them withdrawn before the Trustees meeting)

As to item 16, I was absolutely delighted to see those words deleted from page 17 of the Combo Book. I have actually heard members with many years in GA say "I make my one full meeting per week, just like the book tells me to". I have been trying to point out for years that the book never said that at all, but with those words in there, the members choose to ignore the part that says "Attend as many meetings as possible". They seem to think that those words pertain only to the new members. (If we're going to change anything about that section at all, perhaps we should delete the part that says "Particularly the new Gamblers Anonymous

Members")

As to Karen's remarks on the definition of gambling, I don't really know what we could do to expand it. I also have had discussions with members asking if this or that is gambling. If someone bowls in a league that at the end of the season awards trophies and/or money for outstanding performance, is that gambling? If you're in sales and your company has a 'contest' awarding prizes or bonuses for increased sales (plus you earn more commissions) during a given period, should or even can we not participate?

I believe that in many instances there are no easy answers. Unfortunately, Webster's Dictionary uses the word "risk" in the definitions of both "bet" and "wager". So, the question remains: if one doesn't 'risk' anything of monetary value, is participating in an activity 'gambling'? (Indeed, in the salesperson's situation, isn't there a very real risk in not participating?)

To me, the best answer has always been "How does it make you feel?" Does it excite you like gambling does? If the activity makes you wonder if it's gambling, for you it probably is, and I would just not do it. Common sense: 'better safe than sorry'.

Lastly, I have a suggestion. There seems to be quite a bit of justifiable concern over the large amount of money involved in hosting a conference. I believe that there would be much less concern if at all conferences the hotel arrangements were made directly with the hotel by the guests. This would greatly reduce the amount of money with which conference committees would have to concern themselves. This should also enable the committee to submit it's final report to the BOT in a timely manner.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Chicago, I remain,
Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13

In response to the Alan J's entry in the November Trustee Line:

I understand that you would like to see more local workshops, instead of the national ones offered at a national conference. But please keep in mind that a specific area hosts the national conference and a there is a by-product of this that benefits the local area's membership. It is always helpful for the local members to see and experience workshops that are not usually done in their areas. It is a way to open up the members' horizons by seeing that our fellowship is very broad. If they see different workshops that are not done locally, then maybe they will be more inclined to visit additional national conferences in the future. I can speak from personal experience on this, having had the good fortune of being the conference committee chair for 2 national conferences in '02 and '06. I have received many compliments from attendees of the Southern Conference this past October that we had a solid balance of local, and never been seen before national workshops.

My suggestion to you is that if you want to see more local workshops given by local members, please visit more mini-conferences around the country and hopefully, you will get the flavor of the local chapters, for example Delaware's mini-conference in January, Tampa's mini-conference in February etc.

As to your issue of more workshops on Sunday, I couldn't agree with you more, as I too would love to see that at every conference. However, keep in mind that there is a cost factor at the hotels and resorts we use for supplying meeting space at our gatherings. In trying to keep the conference plans economical to our members, it just never seems to be cost effective especially with the majority of the conference attendees leaving for the respective areas starting early on Sunday and throughout the day.

I, for one, will remain hopeful that whichever area hosts our national conferences, that the conference committees will be able to find facilities that can accommodate all the space needed and keep our costs low, so that I will be able to attend and enjoy all the workshops provided on any given day.

Yours in serenity,
Richie S. - Area 6

I would like to know what other Trustees see as the feeling of the membership toward the BOT. I have offered to make available to any member, the BOT agenda, and then after the meeting the minuets. I have made the offer several time at the Intergroup meeting. So far there has only been one taker.

On another vain, I wonder how many of the Trustees have read the complete agenda before the meeting. It seems to me that a lot of time is wasted because the Trustees just haven't done their homework. Many points of information that are raised are for that very reason.

Bill B. - Area 15

I have told many people in program not to get inside their own heads because it is a dangerous place to be for a compulsive gambler. For this submission, I actually found it to be a friendly place. One can only expect that the opening line for this should now be... 'I was thinking about something the other day...' Not to disappoint those that are still handicapping, that's exactly what happened to me.

In a few days, I will be on my way to Moscow at the invitation of the GA group there as they celebrate their 5th anniversary. Yes, I am a certified mental case going to Russia in the middle of winter, but then I can't remember the last time I acted normally. All kidding aside, this is undoubtedly going to be a very monumental event for me to be able to help in any way possible our brothers and sisters in Moscow. I am certain that I will gain much from the experience. Besides, they haven't been warned about me yet..

News of this trip seems to have circulated in many parts of North America, as I was called last week by a relatively new member who is a US citizen, but was born in Russia and is not very strong with the English language. He told me that he only understands about 40% of what is said in the room and has great difficulty in expressing himself in English. We was looking for GA literature in Russian and whether or not there are any GA rooms where Russian is the preferred language. The answer is obviously no to both, but I told him that I would make an effort to get him in touch with some members in GA in the US that speak Russian to try and help him through some difficulties.

Here it comes...'I was thinking about something the other day...' We have all the technology available to use these days and yet we can't help overcome the language barriers that no doubt exist for many people with English as a second language. Here is what I have come up with. It's a bit of a language hotline for those people who speak Russian, but obviously, it can be ultimately extended to any other language that is represented by people in GA.

By no means am I remotely suggesting that this language hotline be used as a replacement for a meeting, but more of tool to help our brothers and sisters who may not be able to be as free with their thoughts because of the language differences. All I am advocating is that we do a different version of Step 12, with the more established members who speak other languages to be available for a conference call once a week to speak with newer members who may be struggling, have questions about what is happening to them, or just a friendly voice to calm them down.

I have successfully used a free conference call service that provides for a maximum of 100 callers on the same line, although it is probably more reasonable to expect far less than that. As I just said, this is a free service with the only cost being the long distance charge per minute for the member to call from their phone to a number in the Midwest. The allotted time can be as little as 25, 40 or 55 minutes, but could extend for as much as 2 hours and 55 minutes. When we start this, I hope to have a number of Russian speaking people on the line and I also expect to make this a regular event. There are no geographic limitations as long as people can dial a number in the US. If this platform shows some level of success, it should be expanded to other languages.

The international relations committee is working overtime to get the word out across the globe. I commend them for their efforts, but I submit to all of the Trustees that we are ignoring an increasing number of our own brothers and sisters in our own meetings who are adding to the low member retention rate we experience in GA. If I only had a penny for each time I hear members say how the program has saved their lives or they owe everything to the program, then I might be one of the richest people on this earth. All I am asking is that all the Trustees notify me of all the members in their areas that speak languages other than English. In the process, I will hopefully be able to coordinate these free conference calls in a multitude of languages for all of GA. It goes without saying that if anyone wants to get on this train to help out, just let me know. We have many languages to deal with and I am but one person.

I can be reached through the information provided by the Confidential Trustee Listing.

David M. - Area 12

Dear Trustees, First, I would like to wish everyone a very happy holiday season. The second thing that I want to discuss or maybe complain about is something that I have newly gotten involved in. I reluctantly agreed to be a co-chair on a committee. I say reluctantly because there are many different things going on in my life currently. I am newly separated preparing for a divorce, I am a school teacher which takes plenty of my time, and I have three young children that are very busy in their own activities. So, my point is this...I agreed to be on this committee and would really like to do the work involved. I have tried to contact other people on this committee and have not had any response. I think sometimes (I know I should only speak for myself) we as compulsive people get ourselves involved or say we will commit to something that maybe we really don't have time to commit to. There is extremely important work for the committees to do and my feeling is this...if you don't have the time (and we all have busy lives), then just don't commit!! Someone else will step up to the plate and commit to the work that needs to be done. This was not to upset or offend anyone...I just know that even I sometimes feel that there are things that need to be done, so I volunteer knowing (sometimes not realizing) that I really don't have the time to do the work. So, if I hurt anyone's feelings, I apologize ahead of time :)

Now, for some guidance from my fellow Trustees and past Trustees. There has been an issue in my area in regards to meeting formats. What exactly is open and closed meetings. I have read about it and shared with my groups the little information that defines meeting formats. I have also spoken to many other members and trustees on this issue to find out exactly what is appropriate. Here is the real issue...some people in my area feel that if the meeting is labeled "closed" that NO ONE but the GA member should be allowed to sit in that meeting and that group conscience CAN NOT override this. However, other members feel that it is up to the group to decide if they will allow a significant other or whom ever sit in the "closed meeting," if there is special circumstances.

In discussing this matter with other members some say "closed is closed" the group has no say so. Others say group conscience shall always prevail. What is appropriate? Does this effect GA as a whole? Some say it does...If I am Tom Cruise and I go to a closed meeting in LA and no one but the GA member is allowed in the meeting then my anonymity is pretty safe, but then I go to a closed meeting in FL. and group conscience says it's ok for a newspaper columnist to sit in does the newspaper columnist really care about my anonymity if I am Tom Cruise?

So, I was asked by a member to submit an agenda item for Chicago (this member happens to also be my mother, so usually I do what I am told) to see if we can better define or maybe guideline the different type of meeting formats that there are. I am asking you all to help me on this...do the trustees feel that maybe for the benefit of GA as a whole, we need to better define the meeting formats?

I would appreciate any input on this matter before I submit anything on this topic to the agenda. I am assuming this was part of the purpose of the trustee line. I will read any responses to this and if anyone wants to discuss this more in depth feel free to contact me via email or phone.

Wishing you all a happy and safe holiday...I will see some of you in PA. the end of January :)

Love,
Dina P. - Area 6B

Fellow Trustees and former Trustees,

Richie S. here, wishing all of you a joyous and peaceful holiday season. May the holidays bring you and your families good health and happiness. Also wishing all of you the best with the ringing in of the new year. A happy and healthy 2007 to all !!!!

The final report of the 2006 southern conference is really all done. The income and expense sheet is in the hands of the conference overseer and we are waiting for all the written checks to be cashed. It will probably be after the December bank statement is sent that we can close out the account. Then the exact profit will be sent to GA and Gam-Anon. Again many thanks to all.

Now to my thoughts on the monthly Trustee Line. It blows me away that we can not get 90%-100% participation in this publication. It takes very little time out of my month to post my thoughts, suggestions, or ideas. I know we all have something we want to give back, which is why we took on the role as Trustee. To not use this site as a sounding board or whatever you want to say or share disappoints me. It also concerns me that we have this tool to use and if it doesn't get used, we might lose it, which would be sad. So let us all try to use all the tools of the program more effectively in the coming year. Thanks for listening.

Yours in serenity,
Richie S.

To All Past And Present Trustees And All My GA Friends:

Here it is December again. Each year seems to go a little faster than the previous year. It is my hope that you've all had a great 2006. It is also my hope that 2007 will be the best year yet for all of you. If we all do the right thing and think real hard and positive about it 2007 will bring health, happiness and prosperity to all of you and your families. We are now less than 10 months from the 50 year International Conference in Los Angeles. We already have close to 600 registered. As we have been telling everyone the main banquet room for Saturday night will hold only the first 750 registered. The overflow will be in another room with video showing the proceedings. We expect over 1,000 attendees at this conference. Don't be left out of the main banquet room. If you need a registration form email me and I will forward one to you. This is a great opportunity to meet GA members from all over the world. We already have registrations from Ireland, England, Australia, South Africa and several other nations. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Chicago Conference in May so don't forget to register for that one also.

Yours in Recovery
Bob W - Los Angeles Conference Committee Co-Chair
Area 1

Dear Trustees,

I hope this finds all of you enjoying the peace and serenity that comes with the Holiday Season.

In thinking what to write to the Trustees Line this month, I decided to include part of a letter I had written in the October 2006 Life-Line Bulletin to bring everyone up to date on the current financial status of the International Service Office. If you have already read this, I thank you for your patience and if not, thanks for reading it now.

The International Service Office continues to get busier each day. With the influx of gambling worldwide and requests for new meetings and help for the compulsive gambler who still suffers, along with the need for additional literature & help for our over 2,500 existing Gamblers Anonymous groups, we are asking for our fellowships help. Our expenses are skyrocketing, with our income not being quite so cooperative and remaining about the same as it has in the past. For example, the Operating Statement for August 2006, under the "Disbursements in Excess of Income" the amount shows a minus (-) \$13,456.21 compared to last years August 2005 Operating Statement under Income in Excess of Disbursements" which shows a plus (+) \$239.40. This is a big difference in "our" Operating Statement. I say "our" because, this is all of "our" Program and we need to be able to continue carrying the message of hope to those of us who have been helped so far, along with the many who have not found us yet. Benni F., Chairman of the Board of Regents, wrote a letter regarding some pertinent financial issues on hand to September 2006 Trustees Line, which I'm sure you have already read. Please review Benni's letter and help us make the important "projects" that he talked about, become a reality.

As always, if there is anything we here at the I.S.O. can do for you, please let us know.

Happy Holidays with love to all,
Karen H. - International Executive Secretary, ISO
Area 1

To: Fellow Trustees

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a happy holiday and a great New Year.

Now on to more serious business: Over the last 19 years of being a member of GA, many new members ask me - "How do I handle credit card debt?".

No matter how many times this question is asked - the answer always seems to be different. I am taking this opportunity to get feedback as to the solution to this. It is my intention to have this as an agenda item in Chicago. The outline below is a suggested way to reach out to the member who is looking for an answer.

To those who have credit card debt, the following is hereby proposed:

1-A member should buy a notebook and divide it into sections - one for each credit card. This should be done so that when they contact the bank or credit card company they keep a clear and accurate account of who they spoke to, date, time and what the conversation consisted of.

2- The member should ask for a 90-day moratorium (which is a freeze on the account) until such time as they have a pressure relief meeting. They should always humble themselves while speaking to the creditor.

3- If the creditor refuses to cooperate or states that they cannot offer the moratorium, then they have to keep calling and go up the ladder of command until they reach the person in charge who can give the authorization. If needed, a certified return receipt letter should be written to the creditor outlining the details and talking about the devastation that gambling has brought to their life. And then go on to say what the program has suggested thus far. Of course the details of account# must be included in the letter. If they already had a pressure relief meeting then a copy of the completed Pressure Relief Form should be attached. This should all be reviewed with the member's sponsor.

In most cases creditors need to see that they are receiving a proportionate amount of money equal to the total that was available for payback dollars.

4-Usually in each room there is a financial advisor or a committee that has experience in these matters. BANKRUPTCY SHOULD NOT BE AN OPTION.

5-Many people who come into the program are concerned that they keep their credit in good standing, and they are concerned that asking for a moratorium will ruin their credit rating. However, after the payback, within 2 to 3 years, their scores will be higher. Obviously they should be more concerned about other matters. However about 95% of them are maxed out on their credit cards and pay the minimum amounts due, if at all each month. They have high interest rates and cannot afford to continue doing this. The last thing in the world they need is to have availability of more credit.

I am waiting anxiously to hear your views on this issue. Please contact me using the information available in the Confidential Board of Trustees Listing with your input, or write some suggestions in the next Trustee Line. I believe that this is a very important matter for us to move on.

Mike R. - Area 15

Bill B. brought up issues of money in the November Trustee Line that are important to the fiscal health of our program. Here in Minnesota recently went through funding problems in our Intergroup. The money issues have been resolved (for now) by asking our groups for additional money and doing fundraisers.

One of the areas that were looked at for reducing expenses was the Trustee fund used for Conferences and long distance meeting attendance. Our intergroup noted that we could save over \$2,000.00 annually by either sending only one of two Trustees to the International Conferences or sending both to every other conference. I believe Trustee involvement should be 100% not the 50% discussed.

The Minnesota Conference held this past October drew 370 attendees. If you were to add all the trustees and their entourage who attend International Conferences we would be larger the most International Conferences. Attendance is growing largely due to the fact that local conferences are affordable. That leads to the point that we simply don't need two International Conferences per

year. If you don't believe that, why are almost every conference bid becoming "open to all areas?" Perhaps there is apathy among the intergroups around the nation. Plus...if you were to estimate the financial burden on the locals to fund attendance at one conference the amount would easily exceed \$100,000.

From a marketing view, reducing the number of conferences would greatly increase the attendance at one conference. We would enjoy "economies of scale" and more funds would be available to our ISO.

Of course the reduction in Conferences should coincide with the reduction in BOT meetings as well. I realize that some BOT and BOR members see these gatherings as social events, to those I say attend your state conferences, and quit forcing the membership to fund your frivolity.

Roger S. - Area 8A

I want to take this opportunity to wish all my fellow members a wonderful holiday season. For all of us, I pray for excellent health and great fellowship. As we head into a new year, 2007, and rapidly approach our 50th anniversary, I hope we will all keep "Unity" in our minds and hearts.

I recently listened to the 2 new cassettes that are for sale by the I.S.O. and was very, very impressed. I hope the committee involved in putting all our literature on cassettes is making progress and continue to do the great job that they have done so far. This is a great tool for new members as well as for all of us. Listening in my car has a very calming affect and will definitely reduce any potential road rage.

Again I would like to encourage everyone to read and make use of the "Trustee Website". This is our best method of keeping up to date with the daily workings of our fellowship and accords the opportunity for all members of Gamblers Anonymous to get involved in this process.

I am counting the days until Chicago and really look forward to seeing everyone again.

All the best,
Herb B. - Area 5

Obviously, if you are a member of the Board of Trustees you already believe in service work. Many of us believe it is one of the cornerstones of our recovery. For this reason it pains me to have to write a submission like this.

So much of my time of late has been spent trying to get people to do the jobs they have volunteered to do. It is clear that much of the important work we do needs to be done by committee and many of our members put in hour after hour doing the work. It is very frustrating for them not to have the cooperation from fellow members who agreed to share the work with them, or even worse, who should be leading the work as chair.

So I ask each of us to think hard about the commitments we have made and how we have been fulfilling them and let us all try and make the year ahead a much more productive one.

Additionally, I don't know of a committee that could not use more help. Please consider how you might be of service and reach out for me or a committee chair to volunteer.

Lastly, my very best wishes to all of our brothers and sisters for a wonderful holiday season.

Brother Denis M. - Chairman, BOT Area 12

As promised, here are monthly updates on the conferences:

Boston: I do not believe that Boston will be sending a more detailed final report as they believe the report they sent is detailed enough, despite the requests for a more detailed report. Someone on the committee has requested copies of the registrations, but I have not received copies. The Boston committee answered all the questions I had about the bank statements and everything is in order there. The latest bank statement I have shows a remaining balance of \$128.41. In response to my inquiry, I am told that \$100.00 of this is for a refund for which the check had not cleared at the time of the statement. The remaining \$28.41

will be sent to ISO and the account will be closed with a zero balance. I am told that this will happen in January. I have requested and been assured that I will receive copies of the final bank statements with the last one showing a zero balance.

Chicago: I have received several updates from Chicago and copies of signature cards for the bank account. I have also been given online access to the checking and savings account for the conference (the savings account was opened so that there would be no monthly fees for either account). Receipts for registrations have been sent out and I have been advised that copies of the registrations have been sent to me, although I have not yet received them. There was no meeting in Nov. or Dec., but I will receive an update from the meeting that will be held in January.

Portland: I have received an update from Portland. They ran into some administrative and scheduling difficulties in getting the bank account set up, but all of those issues should be resolved in January. There will be four signers on the account. They are working on finalizing the flyer and should have that out soon.

Michelle J. - Co Chair, BOT
Area 8B
