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Trustee Line for January 20, 2007

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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.

Happy New Year

I wish for all, including me, is another gamble free year, a day at a time.

Being a new Trustee, I have been trying to uphold the suggested things of the fellowship inline with being a Trustee. Back in November I went on a 4000 km round trip to visit 4 groups. From this I am pleased to say another new group has started and I went back to the group for its 3rd meeting on Boxing Day another round trip of 700 km. I have now just finished planning another 10 day trip, this time covering about 2000 km in a round trip to visit more groups. Each week at the moment I visiting groups that I have either never been to or have not visited in ages.

In response to Joe and his thoughts about putting the Lifeline publication online. Here in Area 18 most of the groups are not registered. This is changing, and you will continue to see this over my visits to groups. It is my experience that many members do not have access to the web. And many of these meetings are very isolated and crave this form of fellowship. In fact in my own journey I have found more about the fellowship and its activities since starting to read this publication. My suggestion may be is that we get 2 copies instead of 3. Sharing these to members is a great source of information and fellowship.

For me in reading the posts about the financial side there is so much misunderstanding of the self supporting and service just alone within Area 18. Hence my visiting the groups trying to be helpful to clear up misunderstandings and thoughts about the fellowship. Though on my visits to groups I remember the First Unity Step, where my job is to be helpful only and not create disunity within the group. There are many misconceptions of this fellowship I have found.

In my last post I asked about information about the 90 day rooms. I had no replies, if anyone could send me an email with some ideas, thoughts or generalities I would love to hear from anyone.

Kind Regards,
David McA. - Area 18
Aussie Brother

I'd like to wish everyone a happy and healthy 2007!!!

I've decided to make a submission this month in response to Richie S.'s December submission. The Trustee website is such a valuable tool and I would hate for us to lose it. Okay, so here are my thoughts.... in no particular order.

The Florida conference was great and thanks go out to all the members who worked hard to make it happen. And kudos to 'the table' and all the Trustees for a smooth BOT meeting. If only they all ran so smoothly. The 'theatre-style' room was perfect. Using two microphones for the Trustees to line up and speak was also great.

I agree with Gary S. about committee members spending valuable time and energy to work on committees. However, I believe fifteen minutes is appropriate in giving a report. Yes, many motions are related to the hard work done by those committees. And that's what I think is important. The results. I also believe we should utilize this website for committee reports. That way we could see the progress as it happens and be better informed prior to the BOT Meetings.

In response to Dina P's (6B) submission in reference to open and closed meetings. Perhaps we should have some guidelines to define the types of meetings. Every

meeting does it differently. The one way I think is best is the way one of our groups does it. If a non-gambler comes to the meeting, the secretary or treasurer takes that person out the room while the room votes. If one member votes no, then the meeting stays closed. It is not done by group conscience. I've been to that meeting several times and usually they vote to allow the non-gambler to stay, especially if that person is a guest of a new member. However, one time a member voted no and the meeting stayed closed. This member could only make that meeting each week and she had a lot to discuss in her therapy that she was not comfortable in sharing with a non-gambler. So yes I do believe it affects GA as a whole. The recovery and abstinence of our members is more important than a newspaper column or a school report. And then you have the question if non-gamblers are allowed to share or not.

I also wanted to tell Dina what a great job on the 'Young Gamblers in Recovery' literature.

That's all for now. I probably won't make it to Chicago (I'm having a baby in March), but will see you guys in L.A.

Laine P. - Area 7

Going over ISO budget statements, seeing the income sources and expense lists, seeing the monthly amount of LifeLiner contributions (AND, the number of LifeLiner contributors, - the numbers seem to indicate that the entire, 'Income generating system of Gamblers Anonymous' is in need of reevaluation. Since the GA way is to be 'SELF SUPPORTING,' I would strongly suggest that we consider the LifeLiner program as a major vehicle to use for raising the dollars needed to assure a sound financial position for the International Service Office.

Establishing LifeLinners as a Special Giving Club of Gamblers Anonymous would seem to be a natural response of trustees and other leadership within the organization to address the need to provide crucial, continuous funding to the International Service Office and Gamblers Anonymous.

Because these funds are raised (and given by) concerned GA members appealing directly to others, costs of raising each dollar are low, and these 'plus dollars,' to a great extent, would help make it possible for Gamblers Anonymous to maintain, help build, and expand it's life changing and life saving program of service to those still suffering from the problems caused by gambling.

Ralph O. - Area 6

Dear BOT members,

I have to agree with what Gary S. of Area 12 stated in the November issue. Way too much time is spent in Trustee meetings dealing with proposed changes to GA literature. The literature as is seems to be working for the members. Of course changes were made to be gender neutral, even politically correct and those changes needed to be done. Also changes to update certain phrases were required. But why do members persist in trying to change for changes' sake? There are many other pressing issues that GA needs to address.

How many of you have seen the television ads that AA is running on some TV stations? They're 15 second public service announcements and they are well produced and deliver a great message of hope to the viewers. I know, I know, attraction rather than promotion. But if the senior Twelve Step group is running TV ads, why can't GA? TV stations and networks by law have to donate a certain percentage of time to public service announcements. TV has been proven to be the most effective mass communication medium so far. The internet may surpass it soon. So many GA groups have their own websites now, is that promotion or attraction? In this era of instant communication, we need to look at how to best utilize the digital world, instead we are proposing to change the words 'may have' to 'will'. David M. and others have contributed a lot to using the web as a means of communication for GA.

I also agree with more time given to Committee reports, I recall also that some Committees would present 'No Report at this time' to the BOT Meeting. Committees are a lot of hard work and with members being spread across the country, sometimes things don't get done in a timely manner. Give the Committee members all the assistance you can.

What about retention, relating to young gamblers, more public awareness, etc. I hope that the BOT will begin to address some of these issues. All the best in your

continued service work for GA. See you in LA for the 50th!

Regards,
Henry I. - Area 2A

You try to get out and they drag you back in.

I have missed many of the aspects of Trusteeship. I am happy however, to let another serve as a Trustee. I recently received a call from one of our current Trustees asking if he could nominate me to the B.O.R. My initial response was no. After thinking about it, I made a new decision and said yes. There is little chance that I would be elected to the board. The fact remains that "When asked to serve, the only answer is yes". My initial response was probably based on the fear that I wouldn't be elected and that would somehow reflect poorly on me. To be totally honest, I don't even know what the B.O.R. does at their meetings, and being in Minnesota doesn't bring me close to the other members or give me any special insight to the business end of GA.

If you think total ignorance is a good candidate...

Roger S. - Area 8A

Trustees,

This will be my last request for suggestions about how to conduct a successful "90 Day Room". Hopefully we will be able to present a culmination of our findings this spring in Chicago. The committee will accept any positive suggestions, or answer any questions you may have concerning this project.

Thank you for your support
Andy D. - Area 12

I would like to comment briefly on a few submissions to the December Trustee Line. I agree with my fellow trustees who point out that it is a too-seldom used tool for us to communicate with each other, and share our thoughts, opinions, and questions. Hopefully, as time goes on, more of us will begin to take advantage of this opportunity to share our strength, hope, and experience, and ask our fellows for theirs'.

First, Bill B. asks about the feelings of members toward the BOT. Honestly, I believe that for the most part the members are ambivalent. For far too many members, GA doesn't really even exist outside of his/her 'home' room, or possibly their intergroup. I think that these members have very little interest (if any) to any thing that goes on outside of their 'one meeting per week'. It's even possible that they're afraid if they showed any interest or curiosity, they may actually be asked to get involved!

I also have offered to provide both the agenda for up-coming BOT meetings, and then the minutes from those meetings to anyone who wants them. I've had two takers. As a trustee, and someone who is involved, I admit I'm disappointed that there isn't more interest in 'GA as a whole', but I've resigned myself to the reality that I can't make someone want to be more interested than he/she wants to be. I can only offer them the information, and promote the idea.

In response to Dina P's question as to 'Closed' meetings, I believe that ultimately group conscience should prevail. In our area we have no regularly-scheduled 'Open' or 'Combined' meetings, but we do have both from time to time. In all cases of a change to the regular 'Closed' meeting, the decision to hold a different kind of meeting, or even to just allow a guest to sit in on one regular meeting, is voted on by the group, and, usually, announced well ahead of time. This gives members who are not comfortable with the change in format time to plan on attending another meeting.

I believe that the suggested meeting formats provided by GA are sufficiently clear in their explanations.

I very much like Mike R's submission as to how to handle credit card debt. However, rather than make it an agenda item at this time. I feel that it should be submitted to the Literature Committee as possible new literature. Perhaps a small booklet similar to 'Have I Quit the Program?' I would also like to see it include the possible use of a non-profit credit counseling service. My wife and I used a service years ago, and it was very helpful. These services are experienced at negotiating with the creditors, whereas most of us are not. The service got the interest on

some of our debts reduced, and, in a couple of cases, eliminated.

I also have to admit that I agree with Roger S's opinion that we should only have one International Conference (including the BOT meetings) each year. Even if we added one or two additional days to the conference, the additional cost of the added nights at the hotel and meals should easily be made up for by the savings on transportation expenses of a second conference.

Now for personal thoughts:

I would like very much to see at least one or two 'workshops' at a conference, especially the International Conference, presented by a professional, be he/she a psychiatrist, therapist, or addiction counselor. To me, a true 'workshop' educates one on a particular subject. Unfortunately, I must admit that practically all workshops that I've attended would have been more accurately described as Group Meetings, with the 'presenters' giving a short talk on the workshop's topic, then attendees giving their own personal experiences and thoughts. No one seems to ask questions and, if they did, the responses of the other attendees would just be their own individual opinions. A professional, on the other hand, could stimulate discussion, encourage questions, and then answer with authority, if not personal experience. I realize that this may entail some additional expense for the conference, but it would be money well spent. I have a disease, and I am willing to invest my time, talents, and resources to learn more about it so as to deal with it as best I can.

Lastly, I see that there are now 3 one-word changes proposed for our Combo Book. Personally, I don't believe that any of them are significant enough to justify a change to something so basic to my recovery. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

Marilyn and I look forward to seeing everyone in Chicago.
Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13

Hi Everyone,

This is the first time that I have written to the Trustee Line, so I hope that I do not bore you with what I have to say. Just recently Denis (Chairman of the BOT) asked me if I would consider taking over as the Chairperson of the Re-alignment Committee. After a few e-mails of correspondence and a "twist" of my arm, I agreed.

Needless to say, I had volunteered to be a member of this committee at the Spring Conference in CT., and have never been contacted by anyone until Denis. I was shocked to find out that there had been many other Chairpersons who had resigned. It made me wonder as to what might be so difficult in taking on this task. I came to the conclusion, that it must just be the time it takes to get involved, and that many of the "past" chairpersons of this committee are already quite involved with other committees, etc. So, that left me with the thought that maybe it was time that I got involved. So, in "biting the bullet", I accepted.

I was very glad to find out that there were already other members who had put together some great ideas about how this committee could implement its goals. It has been fun in sharing thoughts and ideas, and if you will read the website committee page, some of these are listed. I would love to have more input from more of the areas. We are trying to contact all of the areas to find out the number of active meeting rooms that you have. So, please respond if you are contacted.

I am the Trustee from Area - 2C in Montana, and we are an area that does not have an Inter- group, so I am only usually able to attend one conference a year. I will be at the Spring Conference in Chicago, and with all of your help, be able to give a committee report at the conference. I look forward to seeing you all!

You can reach me through the information provided in the Confidential Trustee Listing

A GA Friend,
Debbie W - Area 2C

Hi there to All Trustees,

I hope everyone's Holiday Season was joyous and safe. You can title this month's entry as 'My 2 cents'.

I recently had the opportunity to use a relatively new feature on the Gamblers

Anonymous website...the shopping cart. It was fast, efficient and was really so easy to use. For all the reasons it was put in place I hope each and everyone of us starts to use this feature, but more importantly I think it is our responsibility to get the word out to our Intergroups and meetings that this feature is now available to ALL of us. Many thanks for adding this feature.

And now another observation of new technology available to all of us. And that is the ability to communicate with each other on the Trustee Website. I go to the site periodically to read the BOR minutes, see what is new to the upcoming Trustee agenda, and of course, read the Trustee Line. But there is another feature that is being used by a few committees, and that is the communication used between committee members to do the work that the committee was created to do. I was fortunate enough to use this type of technology while putting together the pamphlet on Stock Market and Investments that was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2003, but it seems that the technology on the Trustee website is now far more advanced. The Trustee Meeting Rules and Procedure Committee is an excellent example of using this feature to the fullest. I am not on that committee, but I enjoy going on the committee's website page and seeing what they are doing. They are exchanging ideas, formulating policy and sharing with the members of the committee. This is a massive undertaking and I hope that all the Trustees take a serious look at the work being done by this committee.

I would hope all of the BOT committees start to use this feature on a regular basis to get all the work done that has to be done. It is a terrific way of exchanging ideas on a monthly or bi-monthly basis and not waiting for the Trustee meeting to get work done at the last minute, which is how many committees function now.

We, as Trustees, meet twice a year, but the work of the committees can be done all throughout the year, and when the Trustee meeting arrives, all committees would then be prepared. I also enjoy the fact that I can go onto the site and see and read the committees ideas as they are being discussed, and then I can also form my opinion on what I agree or disagree with and be better prepared for the ensuing Trustee meeting. It also allows me to prepare, write down and formalize any questions that I might need to ask.

Keep up all the good work, and thanks for reading my 2 cents. See you all in Chicago

Yours in recovery
Richie S. - Area 6

Greetings to all. This is Tom D. from Chicago.

We all are aware of the typical roadblocks that we suggest to new members regarding money - get rid of credit cards, remove your name from bank accounts, etc. These roadblocks work because the gambler has restricted access to money.

As our fellowship progresses along with technology, we are all getting new members who are Internet gamblers. The traditional roadblocks do not always work for them because they have access to a computer. Certainly one could suggest that the internet gambler not use a computer, which would restrict access to the internet. However, most people these days need/use a computer for their job.

I know we have several Trustees who are very well versed in computer software. I am sure there is software available that would block access to gambling sites. For example, my employer has a blocking service that prevents navigation to sex sites.

What I was really wondering about is if there was software that could send an e-mail alert to a spouse or other family member if the gambler should try to access a gambling site via the Internet. I know it would be like having 'Big Brother' watching over you, but sometimes that is what the compulsive gambler needs.

I was thinking this would be a good, practical suggestion to help the Internet gambler. I look forward to any suggestions from the fellowship.

Tom D. - Area 8

I'm pleased to be on committee to suggest new Trustee Realignment Procedures. More to the point, I am pleased that the committee finally has a chairperson willing to roll up her sleeves to do the 'heavy lifting' that is often times the job of a committee chair. My hat is off to Debbie W. from area 2C for stepping up and jumping into the deep end of the pool when 3 other committee chairs were unable to move the committee forward.

As a committee member, we are examining the entire process and initially our attention turned to the disproportionate weighting of Trustees to the individual areas. Since the Trustees were reorganized in '99 to where the alternates became Trustees, there has not been any substantive change in the process. The bi-annual petitions of the areas to change the amount of Trustees in the individual areas should be a standardized process that puts the Trustees on the same level as the House of Representatives. It is anything but that currently.

One series of ideas that has been tossed around is to allow for an authorized number of Trustees to be granted to each area in a specific ratio of rooms that exist in each area. That information will be disclosed over the next few months on the Trustee website for all to review and help in the formation of what should be a new policy for Trustee realignment. Also, it is important to understand that more power and flexibility should be given to the areas regarding the number of Trustees each area elects.

The idea is that areas will be granted a maximum number of Trustees on an authorized basis every 2 years, as per a specific formula in relation to the number of rooms in the area. The areas then have the ability to elect as many Trustees as they wish up to a maximum number of the authorized maximum. Certainly the finances of funding Trustees that go to the conferences and other functions will play a determining role in the actual number of Trustees each area can elect. However, the area will not lose the ability to elect those Trustees if they don't utilize the entire authorized amount.

The current system of area assignments needs an overhaul. GA is growing very quickly with its footprint both in North America and also Internationally, especially with the efforts of the International Relations Committee. I know first hand that Moscow, Russia will be looking to be recognized as a GA area in Portland '08 and will be requesting Trustees at that time. The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia will also be looking for the same level of recognition. We need a system that makes more sense than the one in place now, that jumps all over the continent with area 3 in Las Vegas to 4 in Ontario, 5 in Quebec to 6 in Florida, and 7 in Texas to 8 in the Chicago area, to name but a few. Although this is not a critical issue, it does need to be reworked.

Long story short...

It's time some of us stopped thinking about saving our own hides as far as being a Trustee and started thinking more about equalizing the representation of the fellowship and its individual areas. I will tell you that under the plan that is being discussed by our committee, my area would actually lose 2 of its current 6 Trustees at the next election. That puts me at risk of not being elected again because of not having enough room in my local area with the reduction. If that happens, then it is the will of the group, not me trying to force any personal agenda I have at the expense of the group.

The Trustee Line has elicited a limited number of responses from other Trustees, but not as many as we are capable of. The Trustees don't seem to have problems voicing their opinions, both pro and con, during the Trustee meeting. Let's all try to chime in on what this committee is trying to accomplish. It's important to remember that the committee presentation has to be approved by the BOT in Chicago so it can get the 2nd vote in Los Angeles. This will allow for implementation of the procedures at the next Trustee realignment meeting in Portland '08.

David M. - Area 12

Here it is the 20th again. A brief update on the conferences is as follows. I have had no communication from Boston or Portland since the last Trustee Line so there is no update to report there. I have had a number of communications with Chicago, received updated minutes, access to bank statements and registrations. All areas are being addressed, and it looks to be a great conference.

I will comment on a couple of issues addressed in the last issue. I do not think further defining an open vs. a closed meeting is really necessary. The program by definition is based on suggestions, not mandates, and I really feel that the specifics need to be handled at the group level. Sure, there will be inconsistencies between groups as to what words are used and local practices etc . . . , but overall I really believe this is the best system. In the example given in the last issue, I do not believe this affects GA as a whole....No meeting can ever guarantee complete anonymity and members who have a concern all know to take precautions. Even in a meeting that is closed to only GA members with no exceptions made at anytime, there is no guarantee that a member will not break another member's anonymity. I like to believe that the majority of the time members respect and uphold each

others anonymity, but certainly breaks in anonymity occur—whether intentional or not-- and no amount of guidelines, rules or regulations can do anything to prevent this. As with anything else, a certain amount of common sense and precaution must be exercised—especially with members who may have unique or particularly sensitive concerns.

Communication between trustee meetings is a very difficult area. No matter what procedures are put in place it seems as if there is a lot of discussion about how to get trustees to communicate more between BOT meetings. The committees sometimes come together, but more often do not. The conferences sometimes keep in touch very well and sometimes do not. I think a lot of discussion and committee work is done at the actual conferences—which, of course, is very good. The challenge seems to be how to keep that momentum going between meetings. There are many avenues available, but all seem to be underused. I believe e-mail is great, and the Trustee Line has a lot of potential, but for some, written communication is not the most effective means. This also leads me to think about the suggestion of having only one BOT meeting per year rather than two. The biggest drawback to me seems to be that by eliminating a meeting, we also eliminate a lot of the discussion and work that takes place at the actual meetings. On the other hand, I do see the financial benefits and think that it may encourage more trustees to be present. I also think many members in many areas would see it as a good thing. It would take much longer to get changes passed—but would this really be a bad thing in the long run? It seems to me that not many changes really need to be made. It is also a major change from the way “things have always been done” and that makes it seem somehow very uncomfortable. Nevertheless, I think it is an idea that would be supported by many members in many areas and might actually do a lot of good PR for how the BOT is perceived. While I don’t have an answer, I do think it deserves more discussion and careful thought.

Michelle J. - Area 8B
Co-Chair BOT
