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## Trustee Line for February 20, 2007

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### From The Trustees

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

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1/25/07 - 12:00 AM ET  
Fellow Brothers and Sisters,

I am from Area 7A in Houston, Texas and I have an issue that I would like to make some strides towards in the next year or two. There are very few people in this Area that have participated in, and even fewer that have completed, a pressure relief group process. One of the greatest gifts of my recovery has been going through a pressure relief group process that now enters it's 4th year, with follow ups and modifications. I have experienced first hand how little finances are a part of pressure relief, and how much the emotional illness (marital, employment, and legal issues, etc), is the most vital part of pressure relief.

With that said, I would like to begin writing a brief piece of literature that explains pressure relief based on Gamblers Anonymous principles, and could be available to people who are suffering. I have seen the one page piece of literature on pressure relief and would like to develop a new brochure that is more formal and descriptive.

I would like to hear feedback from other Trustees on whether this would be something that is welcomed, needed, or not desirable at this time. Please let me know what you think.

If I worked on it now I would like to submit it for review at the Chicago Trustee's meeting. Thanks for your feedback.

Tom S. - Area 7A

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2/16/07 - 8:35 AM ET  
Dear Trustees,

By the time this issue is published we will have less a month before the Chicago agenda closes. I ask all of you again to please get you new agenda submissions to me as soon as possible.

I have been giving some thought to how much time we will need for the meetings. This is always a difficult task as we never really know in what direction things may go. Based on what I think the agenda may look like by the time it closes I am proposing the following:

Thursday, May 17  
2:00 PM to 5:30 PM First session  
5:30 PM to 7:30 PM Dinner Break  
7:30 PM to 11:00 PM Second session

Friday, May 18  
8:30 AM to 12:00 PM Third session  
12:00 PM to 1:30 PM Lunch Break  
1:30 PM to 5:00 PM Fourth session.

I have tried to consider the comments I have received in the past as to the meeting times and I would appreciate your feedback on the above.

Denis M. - Chairman, Board of Trustees

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2/16/07 - 10:31 AM ET  
Dear Fellow Trustees,

Hope you all are well. We here in the Northeast are freezing our you-know-whats off, so it was with great pain that I spoke yesterday to Benni in sunny Southern California who was more than happy to let me know he was playing golf that

afternoon. So much for living where there's a change of seasons.

As the person charged with overseeing several conferences, I'd like to update you on them. The recently concluded Florida conference has given a full report and has made their final payment to both ISO and Gam-Anon Unity. The actual numbers will be presented in Chicago. Nice work by the committee and all the volunteers; I think everyone really enjoyed themselves and the Trustee meetings went extremely well.

The L.A. Conference has been hard at work to make this one something very special for our 50th Anniversary. I have been getting regular committee reports as well as all financial statements. Please remember - the main dining room is limited to 750 people for the banquet Saturday night. If you are #751, you will be sitting in another room with the sound piped in. Make your reservation today!!!

I hope everyone enjoys the rest of their winter - pray for warmth. I look forward to seeing all of us in Chicago.

Yours in GA,  
Chuck R. - 2nd Co-Chair, Board of Trustees

2/17/07 - 12:19 PM ET  
Hi Everyone,

Just to let you know that our Trustee position has been filled by Gina S. She was voted in unanimously to replace our other long time Trustee, Jim D. She is looking forward to meeting you all in Chicago!!!

Yours in GA,  
Kevin O. - Area 13A

2/17/07 - 5:35 PM ET  
**THE "PERFECT" PIECE OF GA LITERATURE ... REALLY?**

Gamblers Anonymous literature is one of our program's most important assets, and all of our literature is written by members of GA.

Until a few years ago the process for passing GA literature was quite simple. Anyone in program could create a piece of literature and submit it to the literature committee for approval. The sole responsibility of the literature committee was to correct only grammar and punctuation for presentation to the BOT as an agenda item for approval. The BOT was charged to vote yes or no strictly on whether there was a desire for this literature. There was still no opportunity to offer content changes. If the vote was YES, the piece was printed as is. Only after publication were members given the opportunity to suggest content changes at subsequent BOT meetings, and even then, the changes had to pass another 2 consecutive votes. And then, the change in the literature could only be made after the present printed supply sold out. Obviously, this system was badly in need of revision.

Thankfully, about 2 years ago the BOT with 2 consecutive votes passed a new, and, I believe, improved procedure for new literature. The new procedure still encourages anyone in GA to create literature. Now, new literature is submitted to the Literature committee chairperson (presently Gary B.) who distributes the literature to all committee members. Each committee member is given a time table to edit content, grammar, and punctuation. Only after the literature committee has reached consensus will it be okayed for submission to the BOT. The new literature is e-mailed to all current trustees and must be received 45 days before the BOT meeting for their review. Again, the BOT is not the place for changes but to vote yes or no on the desire for this literature. **If the vote is YES all BOT members now have 30 days to get back to the literature committee with input. The literature committee is now charged with reaching consensus based on all the input for the next BOT presentation of the piece.**

**REALITY:** For the last BOT meeting in Florida all trustees received a new piece of literature entitled the Young Gamblers in Recovery. I believe this new piece of literature passed 86 to 1. In the ensuing 30 days to my knowledge not one person had contacted the literature committee chairperson with the slightest change. This was either the most "perfect" piece of literature ever written or nobody cared enough to take a few minutes to offer constructive comment.

**CONCLUSION:** It is sad to think that none of the approximately 90 trustees would have anything to add to make this piece of literature better.

I truly believe that those of us who become trustees have an obligation to be active participants in an area as important as literature.

Larry B. - Area 15  
member of Literature Committee

2/18/07 - 12:37 PM ET

I am disturbed about where the spirit of the fellowship is heading as it relates to the actions of the Board of Trustees and its activities. Before I get too far into this article, let me quote a bit of chapter and verse from the Guidance Code.

Other than the Summary of Operations under Article V, the first place the Board of Trustees is mentioned is under article VIII. Section 1 states that 'This Fellowship shall be guided by a Board of Trustees...' I now cite Section 7, 'The Board of Trustees primary function shall be to insure the most effective exchange of thoughts and ideas between all Gamblers Anonymous groups and to act for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, except matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or International Executive Secretary.'

The BOT is operating in a 5-pronged environment when it comes to the Trustee meetings of:

1. Changes to the Guidance Code
2. Trustee decisions that don't make it into the Guidance Code
3. Decisions on literature
4. Straw votes
5. Committee designated tasks

Okay, back to why I am writing this. From my perspective, the fellowship has settled into a phase of 'If it isn't in the Guidance Code, then I (we) don't have to do it.' I won't mention any names, but I am still PO'd about the person who brought up the issue of what constitutes a binding decision in all that the BOT does twice each year. This only served to open Pandora's box. I fear that the Fellowship is on a collision course with those members who are looking to trying and figure a way around things in program rather than those who embrace it.

As Trustees, we spend 2 solid days at each of our 2 Trustee meetings each year going over agenda items with a fine toothcomb. Many of areas we represent think that we are taking 2 vacations a year, but for we who 'walk the beat'; the Trustee meetings are anything but a vacation. There is no question that many Trustees never write to the Trustee Line or the ISO Bulletin, submit their own ideas for an agenda item, or even get up to the microphones at the Trustee meetings to have their ideas on the item on the floor heard. As they say on TV, that's another show.

If GA is going to remain in this world of 'what can I do to get around what we are supposed to do?' mentality, then we all need to figure out what good it is to have a traditional Trustee meeting. That would mean that we should no longer take straw votes that are considered to be non-binding and just a consensus opinion. The Chair of the BOT should then rule out of order any agenda items that don't involve the Guidance Code or literature. If that is going to ultimately be the new face of GA, then I will certainly not be seeking re-election as a Trustee for Area 12 in New Jersey. I'm known as a GA hardliner, in which I approach the Fellowship and the program like bread. I use it everyday and don't treat it like cake to be used on special occasions. The Trustees are doing the business for which they were charged within the 2 sections of the Guidance Code cited above. When a decision on any agenda item is voted on, it should be followed unconditionally. If members don't like something that exists within the Fellowship, then they should not try to twist the Fellowship in such a manner as to make it work for them, but they should submit a change to a Trustee to present at the next Trustee meeting.

For those that are now wondering why we even have a Guidance Code, please look at Article II, Section 1, where it states, 'The Guidance Code of Gamblers Anonymous is not to be construed as a legal document. The Guidance Code is a statement of the aims, purpose and service structure of the Fellowship.' Unity Step 4 states, 'Each group should be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.' I submit to all those who constantly look for alternative interpretations of everything to suit their individual needs in the fellowship, to not pervert Unity Step 4 into something similar to 'Each MEMBER should be self-governing...' The Board of Trustees does not have any mystical powers, but it is the vote of the representatives of 55 different areas worldwide. When a decision is made, it should be followed with the same blind faith that we are asked to employ with our own recoveries.

I would really like to see the Trustees band together and help the various areas, Intergroup, groups and members with the terms of Article VIII, Section 7 that I quoted at the beginning of this piece. It is time for the Trustees to realize that they are soldiers of the Fellowship and make sure everyone is aware that the Trustees decisions are made as a result of 'act(ing) for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.' It is time that all of us stand behind the Fellowship instead of figuring out how to justify our own individual agendas with how we can sidestep what must be followed unequivocally.

David M - Area 12

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2/18/07 6:10 PM ET

Dear Trustees,

I am in agreement with those who put forward the idea of one physical Trustee meeting per year. In this day, we all lead very busy lives and I know how hard it is to get away so you can attend two Trustee meetings a year. Not to mention the donations to help pay for the costs involved. If it were to happen, there would be time enough to put forward a meaningful agenda. One that does not have a lot of similar items that regularly get voted down. I'm talking mostly about changes to our literature.

And I really agree with John B. on the topic of workshops at conferences. Most of the workshops regularly turn into therapy sessions. I recall a couple of conferences that had professionals running workshops and a lot of members got very good information from them. Of course, there are conference workshops that are very good and deserve to be repeated at some conferences. But a couple of workshops presented by therapists, counselors or other professionals might be a good thing.

Regards,

Henry I. - Area 2A

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2/19/07 - 2:25 PM ET I really appreciate the outlet of a trustee line being available, mainly because of the resource it provides for Trustees to discuss pertinent ideas and topics in between the meetings. Being a first time Trustee, this is new for me and I appreciate the encouragement and welcoming of my ideas from many of my brothers and sisters.

With regard to John B. and his talking about a professional in the field presenting a workshop at the convention, I could not agree more. Ft. Lauderdale was my first GA convention and I had an unbelievable experience. The one standout to me was how most of the workshops I went to were group meetings and not enough information giving/seeking. There was one workshop on 'The Ultimate Game' that used all elements of questions, discussion, and lecture. It was extremely well balanced and informative.

I say all of this because I am a psychotherapist and also a compulsive gambler and I know firsthand from myself and the patients I see the disease and its effects on people. One thing that stands out to me is that Gamblers Anonymous does not deal with the 'why' of being a compulsive gambler, it is there to reach out and help people arrest this illness. Good therapy deals with the 'why' of past emotional illness and patterns of behavior that can be worked through and healed, so we can keep from falling back into that old pattern.

In short, therapy does not provide what gamblers anonymous can, and gamblers anonymous does not provide what therapy can.

I would appreciate seeing some professionals present on the topic of compulsive gambling, having some lecture based workshops available, and having question/answer incorporated in these information based workshops. I would be totally willing to present something from the mental health perspective, if it would help anyone attending. I also think that I'm not the only mental health professional in gamblers anonymous and we have people we could use as resources without having to incur any expense at all.

These are great ideas and a great forum to discuss them. Thank you for this opportunity.

Your brother,

Tom S. - Area 7A

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2/20/07 - 10:45 AM ET

Request for Personal Stories

Our Blue Book Review Committee is in need of your assistance. We would like to receive your personal story of addiction and recovery and stories from as many members in your Area as possible.

Any questions, comments and all personal stories should be sent to me using the following link [Blue Book Personal Stories](#)

Thanks for your help.

Gary B. - Blue Book Review Committee Chair

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2/20/07 - 10:33 PM ET

Dear Fellow Trustees and Gamblers Anonymous members-

It was almost 5 years ago that I walked into a GA meeting (with my spouse at the time) and was prepared to finally admit that I was a compulsive gambler. I had 'tried' GA once before about two years prior, but was not really prepared to quit gambling. So, my 'first' meeting was an experience that I have not forgotten. I was made to feel welcome and all the members that shared their story, talked to me, and told a little of my own story. The 20 questions portion of the meeting came up, but new members are just asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' out loud or to themselves. (In fact, we don't even have them read the actual questions as another member is asked to read them out loud). This was important and a small part of what kept me coming back was not having to answer aloud my answers, as my spouse wasn't fully aware of all my damage at that point and answering out loud would have been a problem. Also, there is the little fact that there are still adults in this world who do not read or are new members and English is not their first language.

As Trustees of this Board, we should be concerned with the incredibly low percentage of retainees in this program and how we can encourage new members to come back. No offense intended Marvin, but had I been forced to read those questions and answer them out loud I don't think I would have come back to my next meeting the next day. In line with that, I am also vehemently opposed to the concept of 90 day rooms. I want to talk and intermingle with older members and hear their recovery...Not talk to other brand new members with the same pathetic stories of gambling woes and that our story is worse than anyone else. The segregation of new members for the first 90 days (done in some areas of the country here) is a travesty for our new members. I want to feel a part of the group, not feel that it is a social stigma that I am being separated from the other members (whether for the whole meeting or a partial part of the meeting).

Maybe Las Vegas has a gentler, kinder version of GA, but all I know is that is what kept me coming back and that I still go to about 6-8 meetings a week (because I want to, not because I feel urges to gamble) after almost 5 years.

Karen L. - Area 3

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2/20/07 - 11:20 PM ET

A brief update this month. Boston submitted the final bank statement showing a zero balance. Portland did send a report last month, but it got lost in the mail, so I received it after my update for the trustee line. They submitted another report this month and the bank account is established. The committees are established and everything is on track. Chicago is sending reports as requested and is going well.

Michelle J. - 1st Co-Chair  
Area 8B

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2/20/07 - 11:35 PM ET  
Fellow Trustees,

A subject has come to the board that is very close to me and I'm here to support it. I also tend to bell ring into this Trustee line every now and then at the last minute. Thought occurred to me that when that is done I can comment on the present items right now.

Item # 32 on the Chicago Agenda speaks to a committee to research and aid non English travelers at International conferences with translation problems. Recently I heard a member with many years in the program comment 'If we supply a translator for this language then what about that language and that language. There could be no end to it.' , almost a where do we draw the line attitude.

Speaking for myself , we don't draw a line ever. In the case of travelers coming from abroad, take into account the finances involved just getting there. They are reaching out for some 'GA Unity'. Ask yourself what that really means to you. I wonder what would be said if GA was founded in another country and what they would feel about helping people from the States? Ponder that. I asked that question recently and the response I got was the world speaks English for the most part. That doesn't justify not going 'the extra mile' to help a fellow brother or sister in the program.

I and the International Relations Committee have been very involved in doing everything we can to help other countries with their issues. New meetings are being started in the Philippines, Greece, Malaysia and help requests are coming in daily from every nook and cranny on this earth. Our fellowship needs to recognize that when these matters confront us we have to use all resources available to reach a positive result for them. If that means a little less glitter at conferences that is what needs to happen. The focus can never stray from the compulsive gambler who still suffers and doing everything to promote Unity worldwide.

To those of you who say there is no end to it, I hope you are right because that

means we will never be finished helping others return to 'a normal way of thinking and living.'

I'm off my soapbox now, this subject is here to stay my friends and I hope we all dig in and help. Fresh ideas are always welcome, submit them.

See you in Chicago

Steve R. - Area 2B

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2/20/07 - 11:59 PM ET

In my submission for the January '07 issue of the Trustee Line, I asked very clearly for input regarding the work that the Trustee Realignment Committee is formulating that Debbie W. is chairing.

It looks like the responses indicate one or many of these choices:

1. The proposals are perfect
2. The issues should receive unanimous approval from the Trustees
3. Everyone is wildly in favor of the new processes
4. Absolutely everything has been considered by the committee
5. Nobody cares enough to say anything in response
6. Nobody cares what that crazy David M. from New Jersey has to say

I slipped those last 2 in there to point out that not one person responded to my request for feedback. It is probably true that the other Trustees who have asked for help and feedback have also suffered the same fate. Why? That's a question that each of the Trustees should consider asking themselves. Dare I mention tying that into a 4th step inventory?

What is troubling is thinking about the problems that will come up in Chicago during the committee's report from Trustees who don't like specifics about the proposals. Here again we are not utilizing the tools incorporated in the Trustee website to help with streamlining the agenda and the issues presented at the Trustee meeting.

I ask that everyone go to the website page for the Trustee Realignment Committee. This page shows a series of major changes to the area assignment and Trustee allocation procedure. GA is growing at leaps and bounds internationally and we are still using systems that have not changed to more efficiently accommodate our growth. The committee needs the feedback because like it or not, the committee is going to make a presentation in Chicago and a motion.

The website link is under the BOT Committees menu at the top of every page in the left margin. Under that is the link for Current Committees. All the committees are represented on the page that follows. Click the link for the Trustee Realignment and you can read everything for yourself.

I'm not quite sure that there is anything more any of us who request feedback can do to get some responses from the Trustees. This submission may have been laced with some sarcasm, but it really baffles me, and probably the others who ask for feedback, that we wait for the feedback and receive nothing.

David M. - Area 12

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