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Trustee Line for March 2008

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From The Trustees

The subjects listed below are just a listing of themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them or start an entirely new subject

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Who is really watching the BOR and the business side of the national hotline?

3/2/08 - 10:52 PM
My fellow Trustees,

This is going to be one of the more disturbing submissions that I have made to the Trustee Line in the 8 years since I became a Trustee. In that time, I have seen the range of submissions run from praise of something or someone, to scorn for something or someone else. The Trustee Line was cited to be a platform for current and past Trustees to get things out in the open regarding anything that affected the Trustees, our areas, intergroups and the GA membership we serve. I have heard many complaints about items that have been submitted that identified problems only to be criticized by some who felt that we should only talk about positive things. Well, things are not always a bed of roses and when something wrong has taken place, or something needs to be fixed that others might not be aware of, then we as Trustees have a responsibility to air those situations in the spirit of getting it corrected in whatever way we can.

Putting this submission together, I personally have had to wrestle with complaints about me being the Trustee website admin and that I have an advantage of seeing everyone's submissions and being able to respond before others. That may have been the case when the Trustee Line was published once a month, but that is NOT the case now and hasn't been for 6 months. The Trustee Line is a live document. If someone puts something in this or any other edition, any current or past Trustee has the right to respond to it immediately just the same as I do. So let's all make sure that we understand that this is not my platform, as some would have us believe, it is everyone's, but they have to take the time to respond. Yes, I personally have a lot of things that I believe need attention and/or correcting in many areas of the fellowship and the program, which is why I write about them in the Trustee Line. Those who sit passively by and just read any of the Trustee submissions are by default accepting whatever is written if they remain silent. It's never been any different - if you don't like the subject, the manner in which a submission is written, if the facts are wrong, if you don't agree with the author, then say so in your own response.

Another thing that I have always kept in mind with any of my items is the guidelines of what is acceptable for publishing. No derogatory statements about another member or another room takes the personalities component out of the equation, but this particular matter covers an issue that affects Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. Those last 6 words are reason enough to get everyone's attention. I will try my best to encapsulate this very complicated issue.

Every month, the BOR receives a report regarding the progress of the National Hotline. 888-GA- HELPS is the outgrowth of an agenda item from Harrison Hot Springs just over 5 years ago, one that was brought to the floor by Denis M. from NJ. Gary S, also from NJ, was not a Trustee at the time and single-handedly took on this project as committee chair and created the National Hotline we have today from the roots of a hotline

program that was developed for NJ many years prior to that by myself when NJ was paying over \$700 per month dealing with an operator switchboard hotline. At the time, NJ was wasting tremendous sums of money and I took over the position of Hotline Coordinator saying that this shouldn't be and I found a service that automated the process. NJ's hotline bills went down about -75%. This is the system that is the core of the national hotline GA has today. Let me pause for a moment to say that this is not about me taking credit for saving NJ Intergroup over \$6,000 a year, it was merely something I did because NJ was wasting money. Many people in the fellowship who are active in service don't care much about what happens at the national level, but they will scream and holler when it is something at the local level. NJ continued to pay the old bills and seemed content to pay the \$700+ monthly amount each month because nobody knew any better. Once the idea was brought up that we could be saving 75%, everyone at NJ Intergroup wanted it done immediately. Yes, I did a good thing for NJ Intergroup, but it never was and still never is about me.

There is no denying the Herculean effort that Gary S. has put forth to make this National Hotline concept the reality it is today. 65% of all the areas in North America are already part of this system and his hopes are that it continues to gain momentum in the remaining 14 areas not yet on the system. I don't believe there are any other GA members that have focused so much attention and effort into one project so that Gamblers Anonymous can more effectively carry out Unity Step 5. This is the 'operational side' of the National Hotline. Members who are part of the national hotline love it and say what a difference it is versus the old telephone systems that were being utilized in the various local areas. This is all that the members know about and it can probably be said that this is all the members care about. The areas' focus is on making sure volunteers are answering their local call responsibilities and that their intergroups are paying the phone bills that come in each month. As I said, this is the 'operational side' of the national hotline.

The part that few people know about is the 'business side' of the hotline through the contract that was executed by the BOR in 2006. ISO is paying \$1,600 per month, which is \$19,200 per year, or \$38,400 for the 2-year contract that ends this December 31. This is the crux of the problem that I raise with this Trustee Line submission.

First and foremost, the contract never had any bona fide competitive bids from firms that could handle the business. Yes, one other company did look at the application because BOR member Alan S. felt he could bring in a better package. The minutes of the September '06 BOR meeting reflect the following:

'The present proposal on the hotline obligates the International Service Office for \$1,600.00 per month for 2 years. Further discussion was tabled in order to get additional quotes from other sources. Allan S. from the Board of Regents will get together with Gary S. and investigate this further.'

One month later, the BOR minutes reflect the following:

'It was determined that our present quote from Erlanger is our best offer. A motion to accept the Erlanger offer with a cost not to exceed \$40,000.00 for the 2 years was made and seconded. Motion seconded and passed
For...4 Against...1 (Arnie B.) Abstained...0
Effective January 1, 2007 in accordance with Trustee direction this system will be in full operation.'

The other firm did not submit a bid because it could not handle the business application we needed. Because no bona fide competitive bids were attained, ISO is now shackled with a \$19,200 yearly obligation which is for 'recurring charges and entire program costs'. There were no program setup fees and additional fees in the contract. We finished the first half of this obligation at the end of 2007 and the last year ends at the end of 2008. The contract itself was never sent to outside counsel for a third party unbiased opinion, which might have helped highlight that there are no remedies available to ISO in the event that the telecommunications company that provides the hotline does not do its job. Another point is that it was never picked up that the 888 GA HELPS number and all the local toll-free numbers that access the program are not ours to move to another service if we find something 'better'. Our telephone numbers are being held hostage to help ensure that we renew our contract with the current provider.

'Better' is certainly the operative word for this submission. 'Better' doesn't only relate to a more efficient system, it means a more cost effective system that can deliver the same if not a better level of service, but at an enormously lower cost. It's time to ask yourselves as trusted servants if you believe that a \$5,000 a year savings for ISO is worth investigating exactly how to do just that. How about savings greater than \$15,000 a year? Before you think that this is a random number just thrown into the equation to make a big splash, let me just breakdown how that could actually be a conservative estimate.

In 2007, the total calls that came into the ISO 888 hotline were 6,488. These calls are broken down into 2 major groupings. The first grouping is the calls that represent the vast majority, which are the calls that are routed directly to one of the 26 areas that currently participate in the national system. The local areas getting those calls pay for those calls. The other grouping of calls is ISO's responsibility and they are the ones that get a recorded message to either call an area directly if they are not part of the national system, or if that area doesn't have any hotline whatsoever, in which case they get a recording to contact ISO via the GA website or some other means.

The problem exists in how the contract was structured. We pay a flat fee of \$1,600 per month, which has been explained in many different ways by members of the BOR and the BOR hotline committee. I would be more than happy to forward them to anyone who is interested, because the explanation varies from person to person. Traditionally in the industry, interactive voice programs are priced according to the total number of minutes used each month with programming charges and setup fees coming into play. The

contract we have states that there were no program setup fees or additional fees. So what is this \$1,600 a month in recurring charges and program costs? It was an opportunity to get Gamblers Anonymous to pay for something that was clearly stated as something that was not going to be charged for. A rose by any other name...

All these programs reside on a computer at the telecom facility. Each of the 26 areas pays a monthly charge either on a flat fee for the first year of being on the national system or on a cents per minute charge. NJ is paying \$0.25 per minute. Here is where the math gets ugly. Let's suppose that NONE of the 6,488 calls get routed to their respective local areas and that ISO is responsible for ALL of them. The recorded messages are about 20-30 seconds in length. Let's be generous and say they are 1 minute in length. Then apply the \$0.25 per minute to all those 6,488 calls. That is \$1,622 for the ENTIRE year. In case you are wondering, we just overshot the savings of \$15,000 I mentioned above by \$2,578. Now the fact is that ISO was NOT responsible for 100% of those 6,488 calls last year. In asking for the breakdown repeatedly from the concerned parties, I have received no direct answers whatsoever. Use whatever excuse you want, the reality is that any GA member has the right to ask and receive this information to ascertain how effective this contract is and if we are getting our money's worth for what will be \$38,400. The other fact is that bears mentioning is that after making one phone call to a competitor in this field, who listened to the system, was explained how it worked and the desired affects that were necessary for the caller and the local hotline administrators, I was told that a similar system of at least equal features could be done with:

- 1) - no programming charges,
- 2) - no equipment cost,
- 3) - no setup fees and
- 4) - no monthly recurring charges to ISO, other than the cost per minute charges for those calls ISO has the responsibility to cover.

After 6 months of trying to get the BOR to understand that many things are fouled up with the current contract, even though the operational side of the hotline is fine, and not getting the slightest bit of acknowledgment of the problems, I decided to make this issue public. We constantly make our members aware that ISO needs money. We try for every penny we can get to help from all our members. I am an ISO lifeliner, but it is hard to convince others of ISO's need for money when we waste tens of thousands of dollars on a hotline contract that was not negotiated in good faith or with full transparency with the fellowship. We will now be seeing the BOR negotiate a contract for the next term and if the current BOR is unable or unwilling to admit that the initial contract was a mess, then what level of confidence are we to have that this won't happen again? 9 people are on the BOR and although they feel they acted within their guidelines about this contract, the terms point to only one conclusion, they didn't know the questions to ask, let alone being able to evaluate what a reasonable price was. That is what happens when no competitive bids are received and we rush to make decisions.

The BOT should insist in Portland on a joint committee to be formed with the BOR during this period of renegotiation. When all the proposals are gathered, they should all be posted on the Trustee website for 60 days to provide a greater sampling of people's opinions who might know more about contracts, the telecommunications business and the willingness to act as a trusted servant and represent those who elected us to our respective positions. We are not reviewing CD rates for ISO's bank account or reviewing copier service contracts, this is serious money that we don't need to waste again, as will have been the case for last year and this year. This affects GA as a whole and it is solidly about seeking the help and wisdom from as many people as possible to truly act with financial responsibility on behalf of all the GA members who send any contribution, no matter how small, to ISO. GA is about recovery, this is about business, and so far, the wheels are clearly off the track with this contract and how the BOR has handled the acknowledgement of problems with those who are trying to get them to understand how ignoring them does not make them go away. I am asking for support in this matter to make the BOR responsible for to its members and not have the right to unilaterally not answer direct questions with direct answers, but more so, to change how the contract solicitation proposals are handled. When I first came into GA in 1988, I was told that I can't fix the problem if I won't admit that there is one. I don't know who or what the BOR is protecting, but it gives every appearance that by ignoring these issues that the hotline system in its current structure is more important that the good of the fellowship, which does include how we spend our money. GA should not and cannot be throwing away members' money in the amounts or what will be well over \$30,000.

David M. - Area 12 - Northern NJ

3/3/08 - 10:14 AM

Hello to All on this Monday,

As a Trustee of Area 3B, I felt it important enough to read David M's Hotline submission and I must admit that I read it because of David's separate email to each of us. I guess it is through the encouragement of other members in our Fellowship that I break through the inertia and become more involved.

I am grateful for David's willingness and caring that I was able to read the particulars of his submission. I found it very informative and challenging as well as sparked in me some thoughts about the GA Hotline and how we can go forward with the current ISO contract as it relates to the GA Hotline. Also, it got me off my 'Butt.'

My experience over recent years in the area of telecommunication contracts is that when it comes to entering into and understanding the use and related cost of telecommunication charges it is very complicated and at the very least humbling. Further, it is understandable how completing the initial telecommunications contract in an effort to bring 'On Board' our GA Hotline capabilities would have a tendency to not

understand the detailed questions to ask or believe there is a need to explore more thoroughly this very challenging industry. I was not party to or aware of the particulars of this ISO contract but knew of its existence and firmly believe and state that Gary S did an outstanding job. However, as David M says in his article there is much need to have professionals look into our needs as a Fellowship and dialogue with us about what our needs are as well as the various choices that are available to our Fellowship. Thus, the principle and need of obtaining competitive Bids from several sources' Again, I choose not to point 'fingers' at any of our members that have brought the abilities of the GA Hotline to this point but to thank them for their caring to help us become 'Better' in servicing our Fellowship and those that are still suffering. In addition, I do not make any judgment at this point as to our existing ISO contract and the particular provisions it contains but to say that my experience as shown me the telecommunications industry is a very competitive industry which requires us users to take the necessary time and wisdom to obtain necessary input to better understand our needs.

I believe at this time an impartial look at this telecommunication contract on behalf of the ISO would be in our Fellowship's best interest and also based upon the current culture of the costs charged by the telecommunication industry, we may be surprised at best to find out what is available to us. Further, as I stated earlier, this is a very complex industry when it comes to offering service as well as its related costs.

Yours in Recovery,
Lou W. - Area 3B

3/3/08 - 5:39 PM

Dear Trustees;

Well here it is almost time for the Portland Conference and still some Trustees have not made their reservations. Time is running out, unless you want to pay a much higher prices please send your reservation in today. In just a couple of days the Committee must release the rooms to the hotel.

On a different not I would like to address all this chatter about the national hotline. First, we must remember it was the Board of Trustees that pushed for the National Hotline and then decided to turn everything over to the Board of Regents. With that in mind we need to be careful about these attacks on the Board of Regents. We are in a two year contract and there is NOTHING we can do about that if it is good or bad doesn't matter it is what it is. So let the past go and look to the future.

Gary was the only person who was willing and still willing to work on the hotline and get it up and running and he has spent much time doing just that. How does the hotline work? Well, it seems to work fairly well so that is a good thing.

Now lets talk about the future. The Board of Regents has diligently been working on putting together a new bid for the next contract and I personally had asked Gary and David if they would work together on this project. Well it appears for whatever reason they cannot put the past in the past and do that for the fellowship. David has told the Board of Regents that he has a company interested in bidding the contract and I am sure he will forward the name of that company to John C. so they can be contacted in the near future.

Sometimes we need to look at the bigger picture and get past the past. I have no idea why Gary and David do not get along but everyday I pray that maybe they can try to work on this project together so that the fellowship of Gambler's Anonymous can reap the benefits of their combined expertise.

I often disagree with decisions that are made but once they are made and voted on then we must move on. The will of the group is what should always prevail.

Now with that all being said I also am looking for someone who is willing to take on the responsibility of assisting in moving our web site. David and I have talked about this and he is concerned about two issues. First, it resides on his server and would like to have it reside somewhere else. Now that part is not a big problem since many company's will host the web site but more than that he is concerned about him being the only one who has access to the administration of the site. Now, when I say I am looking for someone to do this it comes with the requirement that you must have the knowledge to be able to run the site.

Now that I have covered some important issues I hope you will all think about them and I hope that you that have the ability to do so will attempt to assist me with convincing Gary and David to work together on the hotline.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Portland.

Tom M - Area 2
Chairman, Board of Trustees

3/3/08 - 7:00 PM

Fellow Trustees,

I am going to try and keep my thoughts factual and without bias. This is a very serious issue brought up by David M. and can turn out to be an emotional an explosive topic. Hopefully we as Trustees and the BOR members can come up with an alternative to the present contract for the betterment of the fellowship. And I am sure all the trusted servants want what is BEST for the fellowship

Here in Area 6, South Florida, we went on the Erlang system and have had very few problems. Then we as trustees approved the National Hotline System, and 888-GAHELPS

was piggy-backed on to the number that our Intergruop is responsible for. We have been paying our bill on time for years, for our number and the national number.

Our bills sketchy as they are, are billed in minutes used for the regular number, then minutes used for the national number. Then they are totaled up and we pay .25 cents per minute for ALL minutes used.

Now in January we were charged for 12 minutes used from the national number that was directed to our number. If all 26 areas on the system was charged for 12 minutes that would be a total of 312 minutes used that the area inter-groups would be responsible for.

Now take the 312 minutes off from the 1210 total minutes used from January, and you come up with 898 minutes that ISO would be responsible for. If ISO was charged the same .25 cents per minute that So. Fla.pays, ISO's portion of the national hotline would have been 224.50. Versus the 1600 that Erlang charges

Also, if you take the 898 minutes, and put it in the equation with the 1600 a month, it turns out that for January, ISO was charged 1.78 per minute. Staggering, is all i could say.

That is a one months computation . Now times it by 24 months. The number is astronomical.

I also realize that the contract is the contract. I do not want to look back. Our recovery tells us to accept the things we cannot change, and we can not change the contract. But we can change the next one, I know WE can do better. And that is what we try to do, Make the fellowship BETTER, Make our literature BETTER, etc. All we try to do is make things BETTER.

I do not have all the answers, in fact I have very few, I am not the most savvy of people when it comes to telecommunications. But I think collectively, with principles first, and with calm heads we can come up with a better way of doing business. So lets find a way to get this accomplished.

Thank You so much for your time, and service
See you in Portland.

Your Brother
Richie S.

3/5/08 - 1:15 PM

I have read over Tom M's email several times, and some of this words just don't sit right with me....'the Trustees, PUSHED for the Nat'l Hotline and then decided to turn everything over to the BOR'. Well isn't that the way it should be done, the Trustees don't allocate money, we as Trustees were also told the BOR would also get a few Bids. Well as that turned out it was only one, a verbal one at that, not written. We also had the understanding that any contract would be looked over with a lawyer who specializes in these types of Contracts. Well, that was not done also.

Tom you are correct that we did sign a contract and there is NOTHING we can do now, and looking at the Operating Statement in the monthly Bulletin, we are paying it also each and every month \$1600.00. What is being said now, or trying to be said is let's not wait until the last minute for get better facts so as not to run into these same problems with the next contract. So what is happening now needs to be addressed, before we get words again, that this and that will be done and not like last time when they weren't.

Thanks
Joe B. - Area 6C

3/7/08 - 11:21 AM

Congrats to Arnie B, for his no vote. What where the other four BOR members thinking about when the Hot Line contract vote was taken? Was due diligence on vacation, along with attorney review?

Respectfully,
Bobby P. - Area 12

3/10/08 - 4:06 PM

If you don't pay attention to the barking dog, maybe he will just go away. That is evidently how things are with my submission from last week. I can assure you that I am not the little boy that cried wolf. Gamblers Anonymous has a major financial problem that has now been exposed and no one from the BOR or the hotline committee has seen it fit to respond to what I have brought up. The reason is very simple. In spite of all the frantic phone calls that are being made by numerous people in the background to any and all Trustees who will listen, in which I am being characterized as giving everyone the wrong facts, the facts as I have presented them remain undisputed. This isn't the Republicans versus the Democrats. This is about doing the right thing for the fellowship and looking out for our members' money, which unfortunately is not the case with this subject. The questions I have continued to bring up to the BOR have been classified as 'already answered'. That statement reads like a 3-dollar bill and if you are ready to believe it, then I have a bridge I want to sell you.

Although Tom made a gallant effort with his reply to minimize this issue, it diverts attention away from the real issues making it seem that this is nothing more than a personality conflict. That couldn't be further from the truth, nor does it have any bearing on the facts and the process. Let me be crystal clear. This is not and never was

about personalities in any way whatsoever. If Mother Theresa were in charge of the business side of the national hotline, then she would be reading the same content.

In over 9 months of trying to get answers to my questions from the BOR and the committee, I have never hinted that ISO walk away from the contract that is in place. It's time for all of us to stop ignoring the 800-pound gorilla in the room and face the truth. Gamblers Anonymous got hit by a train with this contract and we just have to wait it out. Someone please start a countdown timer until 12/31/08.

Numerous emails to me have mentioned that the next board is going to make the decisions about the renewal of the hotline. Yet, in the February minutes of the BOR sent out on 3/7/08 it has a printed report submitted by the hotline committee that states the following: '...the committee for 888-GA-HELPS are now in the review process for our next contract with Erlang Communications and Steven Zimmers. We welcome your thoughts on the matter for consideration.'

I suppose that everything is just as right as rain in the eyes of the committee and the BOR because I didn't see any hint of a discussion to the contrary. Is there nobody on the BOR listening to the fact that we paid through our noses for this current contract? Is the core of the BOR discussions on this topic just to outline the highlights of the written reports? Evidently the 'chatter' about requesting competitive bids is just hearsay, because there is nothing even remotely suggestive of that in the report. We are just moving into 'our next contract with Erlang'.

You want to talk about facts, where is the actual breakdown of the calls that came into the national number. The breakdown will show 2 very distinct types of calls, those that came into the national number that were forwarded to the local areas, and those that were answered only with a voice recording. The local areas pay for those forwarded calls and the voice recordings are what ISO is responsible for. That is the essence of what we pay for with this contract. It seems like a simple request, but the BOR and the committee refuses to provide that information. It's not a wild goose chase. That information holds the key to how much we are overpaying for the hotline. Finding out where Jimmy Hoffa is buried might be easier than getting that information. Yes, I have the email trail to back up that statement.

When someone calls the national number, that call gets forwarded to a local area. If someone is going to tell me that it costs \$38,400 to design a program that knows which area code and telephone exchange is going to get a call from let's say the 213 or 314 area code or any other call and then to actually forward the call, then I am in the wrong business. It might be more believable that my name is Thomas Paine. Who, by the way, wrote the pamphlet Common Sense in 1776, something that seems elusive for the last few years.

What worries me is that suddenly the goal of getting a new contract is on the front burner because we now come back to the concept of 'the process' and that may be more of a mystery than everything else.

- How does this contract bid solicitation, review and decision actually get done?
- Will the BOR just go ahead and get better terms from Erlang and sign a new contract without any competitive bids?
- Since the prior BOR had no ability to evaluate the Erlang contract initially, who is qualified to do it now?
- Do we go into a contract without outside counsel looking it over beforehand?
- Will there be a 60 day window for the GA members who actually own this hotline to openly discuss the contract details?
- Will the Chairs of the BOR and BOT agree to a joint committee to review and approve the new contract?
- Since the current BOR feels that the current contract is a good one, then how are we to have any comfort level that there is any need for a radical redesign of the contract?

These are just a few of the questions that we as Trustees should be asking the BOR and the hotline committee. Yes, I am that barking dog that will not stop barking and the good thing about barking dogs is that they tend to wake up the neighborhood. The questions should tie very tightly into how the BOR is spending our money. Everyone may love the hotline because it works so well for them, but it's time to look past answering the hotline calls and look behind the scenes regarding how the BOR is spending our money with this hotline.

Sure we voted everyone in, but it is clear that the previous board got lured into this contract without the ability to make informed decisions in this area. From my 9 months of getting stonewalled regarding my questions about the business side of the hotline, I can tell you that not much has changed with respect to BOR members who understand this hotline system enough to evaluate a new contract. That comes from trying to point out the important issues surrounding how telecom contracts are negotiated and being told that those points are unimportant. That is outright frightening. I for one am not interested in going through yet another mishandled contract because the responsible people didn't know the questions to ask. I'm not the bad guy here. I'm the one trying to save us all money, which is what the BOR handles as its normal course of business.

In closing, let me re-emphasize that my issues are only about the facts and the process. To prove this, I offer this situation to the BOR and the hotline committee. I will contact the Portland Conference Committee and the Co-Chair liaison for the conference and ask if it is possible to arrange for a room on Saturday afternoon to be available for a 'no holds barred' question and answer session about the business end of the hotline. That will give all the Trustees an opportunity to hear for themselves exactly what is really going on. We will find someone to chair the meeting so that order is maintained. This way, the people that are unwilling to admit to the problems I have outlined won't have

to resort to contacting other Trustees behind everyone's backs to say that I am using the wrong facts. In an open forum, such as I have just proposed, you will all be able to judge for yourselves exactly what a mess this entire situation is. The first step is to have the BOR and the hotline committee agree to this meeting. If they don't, then that speaks volumes in and of itself.

David M. - Area 12

Resignation of Lanny R. from the Board of Regents

3/4/08 - 11:03 PM

Hello to all my fellow trustees and past trustees.

It is with sadness that I resigned my position with the BOR. I had an opportunity to go to Paris, France with my wife. This is the same woman who, when she found out that I was gambling, wanted me out of her life. I did not chose this time period. It is the same time as the BOR meeting, and that would make my 3rd missed meeting and so rather than be kicked off, as out by-laws says, I decided to resign. I want to thank the BOTs for elected me twice as a member of BOR. I take my GA duties very seriously and enjoy giving back to the program.

I look forward in seeing eveyone in Portland.

Lanny R. - Area 1

Past Trustee and past member of the BOR

Denis M. as a Board of Regent ballot write-in

3/5/08 - 12:12 PM

As a current Trustee from Area 6 C, I just recently received my Ballot for the upcoming election of the BOR...knowing now what I didn't know before, it was unfair (that's putting it mildly) that a very qualified person was not Nominated by the Nominating Committee. As it turned out it was done because of PERSONALITIES, not principles. So with that being said I have added the name of, as #19, Denis M., Lyndhurst, NJ , 18 yrs, Past Chair B.O.T. I hope others will follow my lead and also add Denis M's name to the Ballot, and also mark a big X next to his name. I can only hope we can offset the wrong doing that has been done.

Thanks

Joe B. - Area 6C

3/11/08 - 11:43 AM

Trustees:

I am totally surprised of what I believe is the lack of interest regarding the possible write in for Denis M.

This is a groundbreaking issue, with a lack of response by the Trustees.

That being said, my response is basic...If you want business as usual, no competitive contract bids, a flawed nominating process, Don't write his name, BUT, if you want change, and you want someone with integrity and values, then remember the signature of John Hancock, WRITE IN DENIS M. IN BOLD LETTERS.

Respectfully,

Bobby P. - Area 12

More on the BOR nominating process

3/5/08 - 12:12 PM

Dear Trustees,

I have written this letter numerous times even before Joe B submitted his article. However, I have been to worried to say exactly what I feel because I may offend someone. I never would intentionally try to offend someone and I am completely ok with people disagreeing with my opinion. So, thanks Joe B. for helping me to find the courage to speak up with the truth that is in my heart.

I sent a submission last month to the trustee line in regards to the procedures that the BOR candidates are selected. I felt this was a very biased way of handling any type of business in our fellowship. I spoke up and got some great feedback here on the trustee line and a few letters sent personally to my email.

I really tried to leave out of that letter what really sparked my fire. I was speaking to a friend Denis M. and he told me he was going to put his name in for the BOR. I thought that was a great idea. In a later conversation he explained to me that not every person that submits his/her name would get put on the ballot. At this point he explained to me about the nominating committee. I must tell you, that as soon as I realized the members that were on the committee, I knew Denis would NOT be selected. I called it before it actually happened. Denis has been in the fellowship for over 18 years, he has been intergroup chair, a trustee, 2nd co-chair, 1st co-chair, and chairman of the BOT. I don't believe that any member of this committee can honestly say he did not have the qualifications or that the people elected were more qualified. My reason for these letters has always been about the principles of what is going on here, not about Denis being my friend. I think that Denis' experiences in the fellowship speak for him. Don't

misconstrue what I am saying, I have read the bios and every candidate is qualified, however as Bob W. stated in his response there was some personality issues that played part in the selection. He even took a step 10 on this one. Thanks Bob for your honesty and continuous working of the program.

I heard before the ballots came out (hence my last submission to the trustee line) that Denis was not selected. Not a shock to me. Someone explained me on the committee that he would not work well with the other people on the committee and if we want business done then we need people that can work together. Ok, I know this to be partially true, but if everyone always agrees on everything, then do we every really look to see if there is any other possible way???? Having a person serve with maybe a differing opinion is not always bad. So, this person may actually make us look at things from a different viewpoint. How many times have we had our minds made up about an agenda item and then someone speaks in a different viewpoint, we then stop and question our decision? This is a program of progress NOT perfection. So maybe some people don't work so well together, maybe this time they will learn they can agree to disagree.

I have also been informed that this is just the way it is and these procedures work and have worked for a long time. Bob even said the BOR was looking to change the procedure, so I should just deal with it for now. Maybe I sound bitchy, but the pony express worked, why did we change it? So, do I have to just deal with it for now?

I don't think I do. As I have read in the by-laws we can have a write in name. I feel that Denis has the qualifications to be on that ballot. I too am going to write in Denis's name on my ballot. Again the purpose here is the principle, he wanted to serve and is definitely qualified to serve. There is not a person that sat on the selecting committee that could tell me that he is not qualified to serve. Maybe he would differ from some of the other members of the committee (as I was told), but as I said, does it hurt any one of us to look at things from a different viewpoint? So, if he is elected to this BOR (and I hope he is) then the other people elected by the BOT can listen to him and vote against him. This would be the unbiased way of handling business in our fellowship. This is the same process we deal with things at the BOT. We listen and we vote, if people agree it passes, if not then we wait and try again in two years.

I truly hope that those of you that take the time to read this consider the principle of what is taking place here. I plan to put Denis's name on my ballot, NOT because he is my friend, but because I know his passion for the program and I believe that in the past he has served us well.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to seeing everyone in Portland.

Dina P. - Area 6B

3/9/08 - 8:35 AM
Greetings all!

I think the nominating process for the Board of Regents has to be changed. I am coming from this from a different angle! This is an international fellowship; all but 2 of the BOR reside in the Los Angeles area and the other 2 reside in the United States. In my 11 years in the fellowship, I have not seen a member of the BOR from outside the United States. Our Board of Regents doesn't reflect the interests of INTERNATIONAL community of compulsive gamblers in recovery. This is my main reason for submitting my name to the BOR Nominating committee is to be elected to represent Gamblers Anonymous members outside Los Angeles and the United States. I would like to see a changes made so that at least one person always elected from outside the United States and the other members don't have to be within 200 miles of Los Angeles. There is the technology out there for members to participate in the BOR meeting from around the world and don't have to be present at the ISO office. And we do have couriers for the cheques that need to be signed and other material that need to be circulated to BOR members. BOR Secretary is just as capable of taking minutes over the phone as in person. Let's spend some money to get the ISO up to 21st century Technology standards; not working with that of 20th century.

I was honored when I found out that I had been nominated for the Board of Regents. But now as I read that Denis M was not nominated is quite upsetting. I too will be one of those who will be writing in Denis's name on the ballot. Good luck Dennis!

The Board of Regents members we elect will be responsible for the proper administration of this hotline of ours. That should include groups who participate in the hotline paying an equal share of the \$1600 monthly ISO charge!!! ISO shouldn't be paying a dime. That's another topic!

See you all in PORTLAND.

Thanks,
Richard C. - Area 2A

3/16/08 - 8:27 AM

Let me begin by thanking those who have expressed support for my being elected to the Board of Regents. I must admit that I was disappointed and a bit surprised to be passed over by the nominating committee while at the same time encouraged to continue to work for change in how we operate.

Although I have worked on the BOT for many years, it was only in the past several years that I became really familiar with how the BOR operates, specifically with regard to the election process. At that time, Gary S. from area 12 had submitted his name for consideration and was passed over. I was astounded. I spoke to the chairman of the BOR

at the time and then came to understand how closed, and how biased, the process was. Over the past several years I have spoken to other members of the BOR and have lobbied for change. It hasn't happened.

The BOR, as currently charted, is almost exclusively controlled by one single area and, at times it appears, by a small group of people within that area. I believe that for an international organization this is unfair and closed minded, and for a fellowship, it is totally unacceptable.

It has been said that the BOR handles the business side of Gamblers Anonymous. While on its face this may be true, there should be no business that is not routed in recovery and fellowship. The current setup of the Board (limiting those who live outside of the LA area) is antiquated at best. In an era of technology such as ours there is no reason why members from throughout the world should not be able to serve at the pleasure of the BOT. In addition, limiting the number of people who the BOT can choose from goes against the very spirit of recovery and fellowship.

As our experience and our numbers have grown over the years, the BOT has made change after change in an attempt to open our fellowship to everyone and to grow with the times. This has in no way discounted the work of past BOTs but rather has complimented the work they have done. The same needs to happen with the BOR.

I ask that each of you think long and hard about the votes you cast for BOR members and I ask that before you vote for anyone you ask that they pledge to work towards opening the BOR to all members. We need to allow the will of our Higher Power to be expressed through the group. This can only happen if the group, the entire group, is permitted to participate.

I look forward to being in Portland and discussing this with anyone who is interested.
Brother Denis - Area 12

3/18/08 - 10:36 PM

This is so typical of the BOR!! I, too like David M, am a barking dog that will not go away. When I heard that Denis M put his name to be nominated for the BOR and was not selected, it did not surprise me. The BOR does not want to have anyone on their group of nine that is willing to rattle cages or improve on what is going on in the program. The scary part is that they represent the financial part that keeps us functioning and operating. That is why they are afraid to improve their operations! With seven out of the nine members residing within 200 miles of Los Angeles, they have operated with little argument or question. Now it is time for a change.

First of all, write Denis M in on your ballot in big letters!! Second, we need to alter the BOR nominating process so that it is not a popularity contest for the local members trying to get in. Third, we need to rethink the breakdown of personnel on the BOR. With modern equipment and services, members can be at meeting via conference calls and the web with little or zero cost. We need to have more members that cover more parts of North America. My suggestion is that there be a minimum of 4 members from outside the 200 mile radius so that the BOR really represents GA as a whole.

Some food for thought. See you in Portland. Ian S. - Area 6D

3/20/08 - 2:44 PM

Who is on the nominating committee for the BOR? I was very surprised when Daryl R was not on the ballot this year. I asked him why and he said he put his name in but was not nominated. With Daryl being an accountant I would think that would be an asset to the BOR. Now I hear of another person that is not on the ballot.

I too think it is time we look into making the BOR a more International Board. We just worked on our committee through conference calls and got a lot accomplished. There are many ways to do things now, other than sitting at a table.

The contact problem that David brought to light is another reason to include members with the skill to negotiate contracts. Thank you David for waking us up. The hotline is a great thing and I want to thank Gary for all his work and devotion. Now it is time to make it better. This shouldn't be left to Gary to do, unless he wins his nomination to the BOR. Written contracts should be required for all we do. I realize we don't get paid for the things we do for Gamblers Anonymous but we must treat our responsibilities as a job. We are so concerned about not making any rules we open ourselves to numerous problems. We need to do what is best not take the softer easier way. After all, when I was gambling I was looking for an easy way to handle all my concerns. It didn't work then and trying to find an easier way to recovery doesn't work now.

Carol K. - Area 9

3/21/08 - 1:22 PM

I was told before by other members about Daryl R also not being nominated by the BOR Nominating Committee, which consist of much of the current BOR, and which Daryl R is also, and not too long ago being praised by the BOR on a job well done concerning an audit of the books of the BOR... and now being reminded by what Carol K wrote and knowing the BOR is meeting tonight 3/21/08, its all the more reason that the Nominating Committee should be DISBANDED, its seems to be just more & more injustices on how the slate is made up for the Ballot...below is my thoughts on the subject of disbanding then Nominating Committee, in the Feb issue of the Trustee line, and this will work, would remove all the BS, or what ever you like to call it

Joe B. - Area 6C Trustee

2/14/08 - 2:33 PM

In reading this months submission to the Trustee Line in regards to the BOR Nominating Committee. I was wondering if the BOR would consider giving up the Nominating Committee. They could just have elections, where any member that meets the requirements...(abstains from Gambling etc.)..can have their name placed on the Ballot, By a set date. Those that wish to run will notify the ISO, they can also submit a bio by a date, if they so wish. They may be placed on the Ballot in the order on which the ISO office received their request. This way we will longer have to have a member openly make a step 10 statement, after the fact when nothing can be done. This will also eliminate some of the current questions, on how & who can get on a Ballot, and also what order that the names are printed. It most deffinetly would remove the Principles before Personalities question, which at times does take place.

Joe B. Area 6C

New literature

3/14/08 - 12:09 AM

Hello To All My Fellow Trustees,

Well I hope all of you have made your arrangements for Portland, as the conference is less than a month away. I am looking forward to seeing all of you there.

The subject I would like to tackle with this writing is about G.A literature. I for one, have very little opinion on the changing of words, or adding words to existing literature. When it comes to those issues I will always side with the will of the group. Group conscience is something I strongly agree with, even though it may not be the way I would have voted. I will always rely on the groups will. No matter what the level, International or Local.

But when it comes to NEW literature, and there are many in this particular agenda. I believe it is extremely important to keep adding to what I call the G.A. Library. Having more good literature is a good thing for G.A. We get to reach more people, open more minds and expose more people to recognize this illness. New literature gets to help more people and to keep the members we have more informed, and keeps reminding us of the power of the illness. And our lack of power. New literature also reinforces and reminds us of our continuing effort to arrest this illness and keep ourselves on the path of recovery, one day at a time!

Now I am NOT saying, pass every piece of new literature that comes along. What I am saying is please keep an open mind to new literature. If it has the same message in another piece, please don't dismiss the NEW piece. Many times we need to hear the same thing in different ways. It keeps the message fresh and may help reach someone who may not have got it the first time around.

So to sum up if the New literature addresses new ideas, and you think it is a worthwhile piece, pass it, even though it may not be written by Shakespeare or Hemingway. We can always change and improve on the piece as times goes on. But for the good of the fellowship, I believe in ADDING to the G.A. Library. I do not see any drawback in having MORE good literature. In fact I believe in the contrary. And I thank those who took the time out of their busy lives to think and write down all that they have written as the message of hope will keep on getting stronger! Keep on writing new material. I for one appreciate it. And would love to see the Library grow by leaps and bounds, just like the fellowship has. Thanks for listening....would love to know your ideas about the subject.

See you all in Portland
Richie S. - Area 6
1st Co-Chair, Board of Trustees

Female roommate needed to share a room in Portland

3/18/08 - 6:38 PM

This is Kathy H. from Chicago.

My Trustee friend, Dolores is going to be unable to make Portland. I am looking for a female to share my A package with, and the 2 extra nights to help defray the cost of the Conference to our Intergroup. If anyone is interested please contact me through the list of Trustees. Thank you,
Kathy H- Area 8 Chicago
