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Trustee Line for April 20, 2007

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From The Trustees

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4/1/07 - 6:45 PM

Dear Trustees, This is Howie C. in Las Vegas. I have an item on the agenda that I originally wanted to have as page 18 of the combo book. After listening to some of you, and putting together a small committee here in Las Vegas to go over everything, it appears to be everyone's opinion that I spoke with, that this is a very good piece of literature, but SHOULD NOT be page 18 of the combo book. Since no motion is on the floor on this item (It was tabled to Chicago), I would request of you to consider having this as a piece of G.A. literature, but maybe in the form like:

1. Young Gamblers in Recovery
2. A Newcomer Asks
3. Have I quit the Fellowship (Which I wrote)
4. Your First Meeting (Which I also wrote)

Look forward to seeing all of you in Chicago.
Sincerely, your friend and brother through fellowship,

Howie C. - Area 3

4/16/07 - 3:08 PM

Hi. I have just been at the GA Mini Conference here in Winnipeg where I did a Workshop on Women and Gambling. Had some good compliments from the women and some men who attended and the organizer! Dave F & Al S and your committees: YOU DID A GREAT JOB! I had some time to study the Chicago Agenda and I want to make the following comments. If there are too many, just pick a few to write up in the Trustee Line.

NUMBER 23: HOW CAN WE PROMOTE THE LIFELINER? A special can, or special events in our area? I think this is well worth looking into.

Number 25: Where did "39" meetings come from? What if we are not sure how many? Other meetings in the area or even outside the local area (like when travelling or working away from home)?

Number 37: 20 Questions out loud? I don't think that is nice to point attention to the new member. I think doing it in unison when there is a new member would be more discreet.

Number 46: Bowling Leagues: I am curious about this one because I bowl because it's something I have done for years! It is NOT betting! It is fun for health and exercise; it is recreation and socialization to keep occupied; it is leisure to spend time in a healthy environment with others and to develop healthy relationships. And this can go for any sport. BUT, NO PURCHASE OF 50/50'S, NO TICKETS FOR A DRAW, NO Banquets in a Casino (which happened in my area 3 years in a row)! Anonymity didn't allow us to tell others about our situation.

Numbers 55 & 56: The Lifeline should not be focused in the Pressure Relief Section! They have enough to worry about at that stage. But as I mentioned in Number #23, a more encouraging way to promote LIFELINER CONTRIBUTIONS would be more sensible, like a POTLUCK DINNER, AN EVENT WITH THE TRUSTEE PRESENT TO EXPALIN HOW THE LIFELINER WORKS OR OTHER ACTIVITY with a Silver Collection could be an idea.

Number 75: About the 888-GA-HELPS. When I was Trustee from 2000-2004 this work

began. They said it would be all of North America! What happened to the CANADA part? I know we are struggling with a good phone system and what we can afford in our area.

Last of All: What are members comments on having social functions at a member's home? Does this compromise anonymity? Birthday parties, Potlucks, etc: I am curious to know what others think about this and how this is carried out in other areas. I am for it!

Thanks!
Cindie T. - Area 2A
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

4/17/07 - 9:30 AM

As the Chicago conference approaches, I once again look forward to seeing my brothers and sisters that I am not in regular communication with. The program, in a perfect world, would seem less complicated than it obviously is. Many items on the agenda, dealing with meeting behavior, rules and regulations, and policing of our fellowship would indicate a level of controversy that should not exist in a twelve-step program. We could outlaw murder next, but it's probably not our jurisdiction. Now don't get me wrong. I am a seriously flawed man, seeking help from a slightly flawed program. But sometimes I find the legislative detracts from the spiritual end of recovery, a more important goal. I agree the agenda is an important one, yet the strong and meaningful items scream out IMPORTANT and the trivial, inconsequential ones need eliminating, but who's to judge. Is the fact that at least half the people that enter rooms where I attend have no idea what " fathomless" means worthy of suggesting a change, sparking a discussion and a no vote. Is it nautical, am I seaworthy enough to comprehend it? As a trustee, it seems I get far too many calls from around my area to put out fires regarding ego, immature behavior and problems that just can't be legislated. So I think common sense needs to come into play, when rules and regulations leave us short of answers. I am in no rush to get through anything. I love the conferences, every single event social or business, and could never ever repay the program for what it's done for me. But I still think a large amount of time and effort is spent on dealing with the obvious. But in the end, it is the right to the process that I appreciate most. I'm just looking to use it in a wiser manner. See you soon.

Peace and Fellowship,
Dave S. - Area 13

4/17/07 - 10:35 AM
Spring Agenda

Item # 12 - We do not have officers - this item is out of order.

Item #18 - I don't know of anyone who has gambled because of this word. The American Heritage Dictionary defines in-solv-a-ble as (?n-s?'l?v?-b?l) adj. Impossible to solve; having no solution: a seemingly insolvable problem. Seems appropriate!

Item #19 - I would suppose that this change would work for those who 'Almost Gambled'

Item #37 - This item contradicts Step 3 of the Unity Steps. We are a support group, not an assessment organization. If Trustees had to take a test to serve there would be only be one person in attendance (That would be the one who wrote the test questions)

Item # 70 - Nobody represents GA in or on any form of media

These are only a few of the absurd items that permeate every BOT meeting. The truth of changing anything is that nothing really changes. GA has been successful for 50 years and success would continue 'As It Is'.

Roger S. - Area 8A

4/20/07 - 3:20 PM

With only 4 weeks left until the Chicago Conference I am anxiously looking forward to participating in the discussions and decisions that will take place during the handling of our very important and interesting agenda. I plan to speak on some of the items that I am extremely interested in and hope that all the Trustees and past Trustees will do the same.

In the March Trustee Line, Ed K. discussed an interesting scenario. If every person in

a GA meeting was banned from speaking because he/she was still gambling, we would have much less sharing and shorter meetings. Ed, your thoughts nos. 1 to 4 are right on. Unless this was a comment meeting and member A agreed to comments on his therapy, I don't think member B's opinion was called for. Any member present at a meeting whose recovery is affected because another member present is still gambling, must have other issues that make him feel this way... One of the roles of a Trustee is to assure that meetings they attend use appropriate GA literature and that the steps of Unity are being applied. We must all remember that Trustees are not Judges nor leaders.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Chicago and to making some new friends as well.

We are still interested in any of your opinions on the Rules and Procedures Committee work in progress that is posted on the Trustee Web Site and hope you all read this and all other committees progress.

Herb B. - Area 5

4/20/07 - 3:28 PM

Greetings Fellow Trustees-

Some very interesting submissions to the Trustee Line for March, specifically Ed K's description of Member A and what transpired. All I can tell you from my experiences of something similar happening in our rooms or people discussing how to gamble, we (the Chair or Secretary) will generally let the speaker know that we, as compulsive gamblers know how to gamble, so let's keep our therapy if possible to talking about recovery. Our literature does state that one should have a desire to quit gambling and that is the only 'requirement' for membership in GA, but I know of several members in this area (Area 3, Las Vegas) that are still gambling, but also still attending meetings in hopes of removing the compulsion to gamble. Are they successful? Not always, but for the few that it does help to stop gambling, who are we to say they are not welcome. Member A also appears to be in major denial that they can't be considered to be gambling if it's with someone else's money, but again, we cannot determine or change another's abstinence date even if they admit to gambling.

I also noted that the issue of 'same sex' sponsorship and male predators in the rooms is on the agenda again. Although I believe that it would totally be out of line to have a new member state their sexual orientation would be completely inappropriate and out of line (What if they're bisexual...then, what? A male and female sponsor??), I do agree that males should sponsor males and females sponsor females, at least for their first year. I also know that in some areas of the country, and internationally, that this is not always possible. We are fortunate in Las Vegas to have almost as many females as males in the program. Also, just to set the record straight....I am sure that there are also probably women looking for newer males to prey on as well, but putting something specifically in our Guidance Code or suggested format, is going too far. I did like the idea of two sponsors, if it's not possible to have the same sex sponsor. In that case, there is accountability of the sponsor's actions and would provide a sense of comfort for the new member to be able to go to the other person if anyone asked for money or insisted on taking control of their money or assets, and if there was inappropriate touching or actions.

A final note, with regard to an item that I placed on the agenda that is a discussion of whether one is considered to be gambling if they are participating in bridge tournaments, bowling leagues, etc. when pursued on a leisure or social basis. I am aware of the Past Trustee decisions with regard to bowling in money leagues and I believe, that there is a difference in participating in bowling leagues and participating in 'side pots'. Members participate in bridge tournaments, mah jong, scrabble, etc and yet, are not considered to be gambling. I happen to be a pretty good bowler and want to be able to compete against like bowlers, without a feeling that I am in violation (especially as a Trustee) of breaking my abstinence. Anyway, my hope with this agenda item is to revise the current Past Trustee decision as it reads now "Participating in money bowling leagues is considered gambling".

Karen L. - Area 3

4/20/07 - 3:53 PM

Dear Trustees,

It sure doesn't seem possible that we will all be seeing each other in less than a month. I am really looking forward to the Trustees meeting and Conference May 17th through the 20th in Chicago.

Below is a list of our pertinent G.A. approved literature and the latest dates of approval or revision. The item numbers are the same that appear on the Order Form in the back of the Lifeline Bulletin. Since many items on the upcoming Agenda pertain to our Literature, this list can be used to see that you have the most current pieces.

If you are a new Trustee and were elected after the Trustee Meeting in Florida, you will receive a packet of literature (if you haven't already) prior to the meeting in Chicago. If you have any questions you can email me at karenh@gamblersanonymous.org

Item #	Item Description	Latest Version
1.	G.A. Red Book - "A New Beginning"	4/07
3.	G.A. Big Book - "Sharing Recovery Through G.A."	10/03
4.	G.A. 12 Step Unity Booklet	12/00
5.	20 Questions Booklet - "Are You A Compulsive Gambler" (Light Blue)	11/99
6.	"Questions & Answers About Gambling" Booklet	10/02
7.	G.A. "Combo Book" (Large & Small)	5/06
8.	Fourth Step Inventory Moral Book	9/99
16.	Sponsorship Booklet	9/99
18.	Suggestions for Coping with Urges to Gamble	9/00
19.	G.A. Group Handbook Guide Booklet	12/06
20.	G.A. Pressure Relief Group Mtg. Pamphlet & Financial Forms	3/05
21.	G.A. Guidance Code	4/07
22.	G.A. By-Laws Booklet	3/05
24.	The Pressure Group Meeting Handbook	10/03
26.	G.A. Working The Steps Pamphlet	3/00
27.	Awareness Pamphlet - "There Is Help" (Three Fold Flyer)	5/06
28.	Info Packet (New Member Letter, Dear _____ Letter, PSA's etc	3/07
29.	Step Meeting Handbook Booklet	5/02
30.	G.A. Handbook for Judiciary, Lawyers, Counselors, etc	9/99
31.	"Hosting A National Conference" Pamphlet	4/07
33.	Young Gamblers in Recovery	10/99
36.	Short Term Group Sponsorship	11/99
37.	Towards 90 Days Booklet	11/02
-	Towards 90 Days CD	11/02
39.	A Newcomer Asks?	6/99
40.	"Lets Host A Mini Conference!" Pamphlet	1/06
41.	G.A. Have I Quit The Fellowship?	6/99
42.	Your First Meeting	9/99
43.	The First Forty Years	4/99
44.	Beyond 90 Days Booklet	9/06
-	Beyond 90 Days CD	2/01
45.	Towards Recovery in Prison	10/02
46.	The Stock Market, Retirement Accounts and Gamblers Anonymous	10/03

I look forward to seeing many of you in few "short weeks". And for those of you who will not be in Chicago, hopefully I will see you in Los Angeles in October.

Love to all,
Karen H. - International Executive Secretary
Area 1

4/20/07 - 4:42 PM

Here is an update on upcoming conferences. Chicago is getting me all the financial

information, minutes and other information I request and submitting materials for my review. The committee has been working very hard and it is going to be a great conference. If you have not registered---better do that now! Portland's bank account is set and the subcommittees are formed. The flyer will be going out soon and will be available in Chicago, so register early.

With the BOT meeting in mind I just encourage everyone to be prepared in advance as I think that is the one thing that can make the meeting run much more efficiently. There are a number of changes to the Guidance Code and to the Combo Book. Remember that the motion made does not have to be exactly as it appears on the Agenda. In other words, it is appropriate to reword in advance and clarify prior to making a motion; fill out that motion sheet early! Also, while an agenda item cannot be withdrawn, no motion has to be made—it can be a discussion only question or discussion may not even take place.

I continue to believe that the GA program is strong. While there is always room for improvement and some of the proposals certainly have merit, I just ask that we all consider what the proposed changes will really accomplish. The Combo Book and Guidance Code work. They are not perfect and never will be, but they work. I am not saying that no changes should ever occur; and maybe some of the proposed changes should be passed; but I believe that the majority of the proposed changes go more to form than to substance. There will probably never be 100% consensus on a preference for one word over another. Does the current language get the point across? Does the proposed change add or clarify something needed or just provide an interpretation already contained in the current language? In considering the Combo Book and the Guidance Code, we will never be able to address every possible contingency. Some interpretation and reasonableness is always going to be necessary. Micromanaging the program and trying to account for every possible "what if" is dangerous business that may very well have unintended consequences. Just a few thoughts to keep in mind while reviewing the agenda. It looks as if we will have some good discussions and that is certainly a vital part of keeping GA strong as well.

Thanks to everyone working on the Chicago conference and I look forward to seeing everyone soon!

Michelle J. - Co Chair BOT
Area 8B

4/20/07 - 9:04 PM

Greetings to all Trustees and former Trustees

In looking over the agenda of the Chicago conference, I see one of the most ambitious and important agendas that I have ever seen. I am looking forward to hear the opinions of others on many of the items and have a few of my own. I am also looking forward to the discussions of some items that I have formed no real opinion, but as I look at the item I can see the importance and validity of the item. I hope ALL Trustees have done this and are ready so the meeting does not get bogged down in technicalities, and we can get to the real 'meat and potatoes' of the issues. I would hope that all items be given the same concentration and would like to see NO items tabled...they are just too important in my opinion. Looking forward to seeing everyone and working on getting this ambitious agenda.

Serenity and peace to all
Richie S. - Area 6

4/20/07 - 9:32 PM

By now you should have all received or downloaded your copy of the Chicago Agenda. As you can see I was not exaggerating as to the quantity nor the quality of the agenda. We have many very serious items to discuss. I am especially excited about some of the items dealing with the Guidance Code.

In light of this I will not raise any new issues here but instead will again plead with each of you to study the agenda as soon as possible and discuss items with members in your area. Many of these items could have a dramatic effect on how we operate as a fellowship and they deserve our best efforts.

I would also like to again remind the chairs of our various committees that they should be submitting reports to the website administrator so they can be posted on the website two weeks prior to the meeting.

Lastly, please think long and hard about being of service to the board. Almost all of our committees could use more help and a few are even in danger of being

disbanded due to lack of support.

Thank you all for your continued cooperation and I look forward to our meeting in a few short weeks.

Brother Denis - Chairman, Board of Trustee
Area 12

4/20/07 - 11:59 PM

Having given everyone the chance to send their submissions in before midnight, I get the very last word as the editor of the Trustee Line.

The Chicago agenda has come together, in my opinion, as possibly being the most significant agenda in a great number of years. There are 18 agenda items that deal with the Guidance Code that are part of the new business part of the agenda. 7 are items that are being put up for a vote from the Past Trustee Decisions Committee. That leaves 11 new items that are coming to the floor for the 1st time. With 64 new agenda items aside from the 2 conference bids, that means that 17.2% of the new items will deal with the Guidance Code. As everyone knows, it will take a two-thirds majority on 2 successive votes to get these items into the Guidance Code. Since there will not be a Trustee Line for May because of the Chicago conference, I want to offer my thought regarding 5 of these items and ask that every Trustee take some extra time and think these items over, as they have the ability to heavily reinforce our 'principles, not personalities' theme. The decisions rendered by the Trustees must be made on the basis of 'WHAT is right, not WHO is right.'

The common thread that runs through each of these is how so many of our members use the fellowship for their own personal agendas. This comes in the form of using our Trustee decision process as a weapon against Unity Step 1 by splintering groups and members by using those decisions as a roadmap for what Trustees want to do to avoid doing their jobs. As Trustees we do not have the luxury of implementing our own interpretation into what the Guidance Code says along with the decisions of the Board of Trustees that everyone works so hard at twice each year. Yet, there are those who don't want to create any controversy or be viewed upon as being unpopular so that they can be assured of getting re-elected for another 2-year term. This is done with attitudes of 'Who is it really hurting?' or 'If it helps one person, then it's worth it.' Which local GA member is going to 'govern' over things like that? Obviously, that is a violation of Unity Step 2. This is one reason for the Guidance Code and the decisions of the Board of Trustees. If we start by strengthening the Guidance Code with clearer terms, we remove the interpretive issues that many GA members use to 'get around' the Guidance Code, and we also remove the personalities aspect. If we have truly made a decision to turn over our will...then there wouldn't be any discussion that comprises excuses as to why things aren't being done the way the Board of Trustees has decided, which is done collectively as a group that represents all of Gamblers Anonymous.

Item 26 is about closing the loophole with literature. I have heard many GA room Trusted Servants that outwardly defy Article VII, Section 1 and place non-approved or non-appropriate out on display. Their answer is that it doesn't violate the Guidance Code because they are not 'using' the literature. Obviously, this section emboldens many of the GA members to do what they want because after all, we are self-governing, which for some means they can do whatever they want. The essence of 'using' must incorporate 'displaying' and 'distribution' of such material. Additionally, we are not dealing with the issue of what else is in the room. The ISO Bulletin is not GA approved literature. It has been deemed as GA appropriate and this section does not cover GA appropriate material. So it could be argued that the ISO Bulletin is not allowed to be displayed in the room. Obviously, this shouldn't result in an argument so we need to deal with this head on. GA appropriate material has to be defined and that is covered by item 58. Let's plug this hole by voting in favor of this change.

Item 57 is about finally defining what GA approved literature is. Believe it or not, there are those people that don't know what is GA approved literature and when questioned, they want to see it in writing. We define what a meeting is and so many other terms in GA. It's time to make it unequivocal and is long over due. Let's plug this hole by voting in favor of this new addition to the Guidance Code.

Item 58 is about finally defining what is GA appropriate literature. Another fact is that many members and Trustees believe that anything that gives the appearance of helping GA members with their struggle in dealing with compulsive gambling is appropriate material. That is 1,000% false. We have the need to define with this means. If look at your past Trustee decisions, under Section 6 - Literature, item 21 states, 'Board consensus is that only G.A. -approved and appropriate literature

should be included in "New Member Packets". G.A. flyers, Intergroup lists and phone lists are considered as appropriate literature. ? Chicago, 1997.' This was a straw vote. It's time to put some teeth into subject of GA appropriate material. Let's plug this hole by voting in favor of this new addition to the Guidance Code.

Item 59 is about a Guidance Code provision that allows for the publishing of bulletins and newsletters at the Intergroup level. We leave the door open for this but it now becomes a matter of what material we publish in these publications. This has to be treated as a literature issue, so that we don't get items published that would violate the premises of our fellowship. It is a way to bring added strength to the subject of appropriateness for this already approved communication platform. Let's plug this hole by voting in favor of this change.

Item 62 is probably the most sweeping item of the entire agenda. Currently, there are only Guidelines for the Trustees, as outlined in the green Information Packet. If you want to watch something unusual, show this section to a Trustee that is trying to find the wiggle around provisions of the Guidance Code or past Trustee decisions and it won't get any attention. At the very least, you will get the smug answer of 'It is only a set of Guidelines, I don't have to follow them.' Well guess what, this agenda item makes it clear what a Trustee must do. If this is going to be an item that you can't support, then frankly, you need to ask if you should be a Trustee at all. Yes, I understand that this statement may anger some Trustees, but for those that want to carry out the job of Trustee more effectively, then it is a creed of conduct to upgrade what might more appropriately be called the Trustee Code of Conduct. Let's plug this hole by voting in favor of this new addition to the Guidance Code.

I have heard many rationalizations about why we should leave everything the way it is because it has been working for close to 50 years. One Trustee told me that he will never vote for anything that changes the Combo Book or the Guidance Code because it works fine the way it is. I agree that changing punctuation, bolding phrases or replacing words like insolvable with unsolvable is time not well spent by the Trustees, but substantive issues like what we have before us with this agenda need to be done.

Those same people who say it's fine the way it is have stopped thinking about how this fellowship has changed over the years. Members are becoming self-empowered to the point where they can make their own rules by choosing to implement what aspects of the program they think works for them and should work for others. I have lost count of those Trustees who use the phrase 'My program tells me to do' We need to arm ourselves (the Trustees) with the printed word that allows us to level the playing field in ALL rooms, irrespective of where they are. I am not advocating that we force our way on the rooms in our respective areas. I am only saying that we should not have issues that are subject to interpretation by Trustees or Trusted Servants. We should be able to point out the sections of our Guidance Code and decisions that clearly spell out what is supposed to be done without equivocation.

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon group unity. Think about that for a minute and remember the word 'group' doesn't just apply to the meeting you are attending. It is a global term that refers to the fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. If all rooms are following the same provisions from the Guidance Code and decisions of the Board of Trustees, we might actually become stronger and retain more members. No longer should a Trustee have to look the other way when something is wrong in a room. Upholding and implementing the work of the Board of Trustees is part and parcel to the items on this agenda.

I will have more to say in Chicago about these items and I ask for everyone's support for the necessary two-thirds vote that will carry these items in both Chicago and Los Angeles.

David M. - Area 12
