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Trustee Line for April 2009

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

Memorial Honor Roll

4/1/09 - 2:25 PM
To My Fellow Trustees

It is heart-warming to see this addition to our Trustee Website. There are so many dedicated Members and Trustees who have walked the path before us and who have contributed greatly to the Gamblers Anonymous Program. It is fitting that they be so honored. Thank you.

Linda S. - Trustee, Area 3A - San Diego

Public Relations Plea

4/2/09 - 2:03 PM
Fellow Members,

The public relations committee is going to be putting out a questionnaire for all of you to fill out during or between our sessions in KC. We will be looking for the name and contact information of your intergroup's public relation chairperson as well as any questions they or anyone in your intergroup may have regarding PR work. We plan on compiling a data base to inform them of the current tools available, make them aware of new tools we may develop and encourage them to get PR campaigns started in each area. If there is no PR chairperson then contact information of your intergroup's chairperson or vice chairperson would be greatly appreciated. This information will be vital for us to continue down the path our committee has set forth. We feel that with our primary purpose being what it is, then it is imperative that we must encourage public relations growth to further the achievement of said purpose. PLEASE, PRETTY PLEASE have this information ready for KC and help us to fulfill our new mission statement. We have twenty-eight days till most of us arrive in KC, take one hour out of one of those days and gather this information for us.

Thank You in Advance,

Who is the compulsive gambler who still suffers?

4/6/09 - 12:31 AM

To me the compulsive gambler who still suffers is not just the compulsive gambler that has yet to find the rooms. It also is those that are in the rooms and those who have come and gone. Many of us face life issues that could return us to gambling without the help of fellow members in the room, sponsors and the literature. Area Nine has had a lot of illness, death, and has many people unemployed due to the current state of our nation. The good thing to come of all the problems is the support I see being given to one another.

As I work on my recovery I seem to notice those around me more. Just a hug at the meeting, taking a little time to speak an encouraging word, lending an ear or a shoulder has allowed me to thaw the frozen state I was in when I got to the rooms.

Being on the other side is healing too. I can't begin to express the emotions I have felt from all the support I have received. The hugs, meetings before and after the meetings, riding with someone to and from meetings, phone calls and emails. I think I am learning what it is to be cared for.

Please remember as we come together to do the business of the Board of Trustees to take time to greet each other with a smile. I hope to make at least one new friend in the fellowship, add a couple more numbers in my cell phone, and learn and grow more.

Carol K. - Area 9

Agenda madness

4/6/09 - 3:07 PM

For those of you who know me, it is clear that I come to the Trustee meetings to work and not to party. That means, I am 100% into every session of the Trustee meetings listening to every item, irrespective of who put the item on the agenda or what merits the item has or doesn't have. We all give this Trustee meeting a minimum of 2 days attention, but we seem to many times rush through the agenda on Friday afternoon so as not to interfere with the efforts of the conference committee and the opening ceremonies. This is all fine and well, but we should not be shortchanging the attention any item on the agenda should receive, regardless of how we handicap their ability to pass. If we have to hold sessions late on Friday and most of Saturday and Sunday, so be it. The conference will still be a success because everyone has paid for it in advance. If the Trustees do not attend every function, it will not affect anything other than attendance at those particular functions.

However, there is a lot that we can do to improve the quality of our future agendas. I'm going to deal with a few of them in the hopes that we can all make these improvements. Let me first say that I am not trying to discourage, intimidate or ridicule anyone from putting an item on the agenda. What I am asking for is for the Trustees who submit the items to become a bit more active in the process and not just act as a messenger for our other GA members. What that means is that we should not just ask GA members to give us items to submit and just add them to the agenda. We need to sit down with that member and ask questions like

- 1) What is the real intention for the motion?
- 2) Who is going to benefit from the motion's passage, the author, the rooms, GA as a whole or the compulsive gambler who still suffers.
- 3) Has the person discussed the item with other trusted servants to gain a consensus opinion with its wording?
- 4) What objections has the person received?
- 5) Why is the person unwilling to incorporate language to overcome those objections?
- 6) Has the person sat down with the Trustee submitting the item to the agenda for a better understanding of how the procedure works for dealing with agenda items and motions at the BOT level?

All of this requires us, as Trustees, to help the authors shape the item. We need to act a sounding board to either make the person realize that the item(s) may face some difficulties, without the Trustee handicapping the potential outcome, or to take something that appears to be well thought out and try to make it as bulletproof as possible. Speaking for myself, I would have a better feeling about the work the BOT does if we passed more items of substance rather than rejecting the majority of what we get on our agendas.

Another point to this topic is that the agenda items get submitted with

sufficient time to be reviewed by every Trustee and more important, to have any Trustee who doesn't like an agenda item to let the author know about their objections in advance to hopefully get the author to understand the weaknesses and possibly correct them with revisions in the agenda items.

Any Trustee who has taken the time to review the agenda items in detail, should be honestly able to say that many of the items seem ridiculous to them. As they say, opinions vary, and it is possible that one person could make a statement to get people thinking about the possible merits of passing that item. Remote though it may be, it is a possibility.

My question is why we have so many Trustees that are quiet about their disapprovals to certain items until they hit the floor? We can't we contact the author to such items and work with them to voice the objections we have and work with the author to share our experience, strength and hope with them to improve the items? We attend these Trustee meetings to make our Fellowship better. What satisfaction is there in voting down item after item?

I remember my first agenda item in Harrison Hot Springs in 2002. It failed 21-50 mostly because one person got up to the microphone and said some things that were totally not applicable to the motion, yet it was enough to sway the group to defeat the item. I was very discouraged from the event, which took me until the next conference to regain my confidence. My point is, if that Trustee took the time to let me know about her objection and we had a chance to talk about it before the Trustee meeting, the item might have passed, which would have been beneficial to GA members internationally to this day. Ultimately, it boils down to better communications between the Trustees and between the Trustees and the members.

My last issue is a bit more sensitive in nature. That is about those who submit items to the agenda that once brought to the floor do not even get a discussion. I understand that nobody can handicap the reception or reaction of the Board of Trustees to an item on the agenda, but when there is no discussion on the item, shouldn't the author(s) know that there is no interest in such an item? Getting that message is sometimes shocking for the author, but when it is delivered to the author...the author has to understand it.

What is disturbing is to then see the same exact item on the next agenda, as if the outcome will be reversed in BOT sentiment. That to me is part of 'agenda madness.' My solution to this situation is to ask that person the questions I cited above and add to them the question of whose purpose is being served by resubmitting this and taking away time from the BOT to consider other new items? Is this about ego, boredom or a need to be noticed at the BOT meetings? Yes, I know it sounds a bit harsh, but this subject needs to be addressed.

To me it severely jades the opinions of the rest of the Trustees when such people submit an item, that few Trustees will in fact have an open mind about the item. Again, everyone has the right to submit an item, but let's all make a commitment to upgrade the procedures we use in formulating these items before they hit the agenda. Let's commit to assisting the GA members who have the courage of their conviction to try and make things better by submitting agenda items by helping the authors to strengthen the items, and just maybe improve the possibilities of the items to get passed.

In the meantime, I hope that any items that hit the floor in Kansas City and appear to have not any discussion possible, will get a motion that will force a vote. If the item is rejected in a similar way, I would hope that the author(s) get the message. If he/she doesn't, then maybe the rest of us can feel better knowing that the item will not be able to be heard for 2 years. It's time to think twice and act once.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

4/6/09 - 8:16 PM

David -

I know many Trustees feel as you do, and I am in great sympathy with that attitude. I am guilty of being a "messenger" at times - but am so PLEASED that members are getting involved that I forget the other side of the coin. I have printed out your questions to work with members submitting items for the agenda in the future. Perhaps greater "agenda preparation" should be part of the Trustee Guidelines.

There is one element, however, that has been a pesky mosquito since my first Trustee meeting. The Combo Book IS, in fact, grammatically incorrect; and anyone with one iota of knowledge about the English language hears it, sees it, and feels it when they read it. We are not dealing with stupid people. I remember the agenda item asking Karen to grammatically correct the Combo Book - and I remember my absolute shock when that item was voted down by the BOT at that meeting. I could not believe my eyes or ears. I love the Combo Book; I think I recite it in my sleep. But I am also open-minded enough to know that changing it to be grammatically correct will not alter, will not

change, will not affect ANY feeling, emotion, or advice being given to the new member. With all my heart, I truly believe that most of the Combo Book agenda items are due to members' discomfort with grammar and phraseology (?).

Why not correct its mistakes? What are we afraid of? - that we can't recite it by heart any longer? On page 9, I still stumble over "gambling has defeated them," because when I came into the Program, it was "gambling has then licked."

What that does do is make me pay attention every single time I read the Combo Book and not take it for granted. It is perhaps one of the most powerful tools we have in the Program - and dang it, I wish it was perfect!!!! I am now going to "let it go."

Linda S. - Trustee - Area 3A - San Diego

4/9/09 - 1:56 PM

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Well in just a few short weeks we will be in Kansas City doing the business of Gambler's Anonymous. This time we have a full agenda which will necessitate moving along in an orderly manner. We will adhere to the rules strictly on comments and the head table will stop those who are not on the subject.

We should all plan on a long meeting. We have elections at this meeting and this will take time to accomplish. With that being said please make sure if you get up to talk that what you want to say has not already been said.

I want to thank David M. for putting together the list of failed combo book items and we should all think about that when we are putting items on the agenda.

Maybe the time has come to put a cap on the number of items we will accept for the agenda or maybe even from an area. All thoughts for the future.

Also Keep Kath H. from Chicago in your prayers her husband was admitted to hospice yesterday.

For now have a safe trip and I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Tom M. - Area 2, Northern California
Chairman Board of Trustees

4/21/09 - 12:10 PM

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters,

I haven't submitted anything to the Trustee Line in a while, but I do read it often, and recently I saw the submission by our friend, David M, in which he states "I hope that any items that hit the floor in Kansas City and appear to have not any discussion possible, will get a motion that will force a vote". I'd like to respond.

If we are indeed guided by Robert's Rules, his wish can easily be granted. It's up to the chairman. Robert's Rules calls for a motion to be made and seconded, THEN discussion takes place. If no one rises to make remarks, a vote is called for.

We have been doing it backwards. The chair should either read the agenda item in the form of a motion, or call on the submitting trustee to make the motion. Once the motion has been made and seconded, the chair calls for remarks. If there is no one willing to speak either for or against the motion, the chair calls for the vote. Obviously, if no one is even willing to make a motion, the item dies. BUT, as long as a motion is made, the item is settled either way for two years.

Technically, at a business meeting, any discussion of an agenda item absent a motion is out of order.

Keep up the great work, David.

Your friend in recovery,
John B - Area 13, Eastern Pennsylvania

4/21/09 - 2:31 PM

A response to John B's posting:

John,

Many of the items that appear on the agenda are quietly deemed as absurd, ludicrous, idiotic and probably a few other adjectives that could be more colorful. My only point is that those items are brought to the floor by the author and the designated representative when virtually everyone rolls their eyes at having to take the time to deal with the issue. Most of the time, if

that person is a Trustee, the item will move to a motion. In that case, just as you say, a decision is rendered and if it fails, we have the item off future agendas for a 2-year period.

What you didn't tackle was the items that are considered ridiculous that are brought to the floor by a past Trustee or a GA member who was the author of the item. In such a case, a motion cannot be made by either party. It is not incumbent or appropriate upon the Chair to query the body to see if anyone is prepared to make a motion, because the item may end up just as a discussion prior to a motion. Items brought to the floor are not automatically supposed to be motions. Article VIII, Section 7 of the Guidance Code states:

'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 matter coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or International Executive Secretary.'

The point of all this is that most of the items that are brought to the floor from people unable to make a motion generally die. That is the issue I am talking about. If not a single person is interested in speaking about it at that meeting and the item dies, why are we listening to the same item again at the next meeting? Is it realistic to expect a sudden reversal for overwhelming support of that same item? Certainly not. That is the heart of the issue. To eliminate the dilatory effect of such a situation on the already overflowing Trustee meeting agendas, we should be make a motion, as desired by the author(s) and let the item(s) fail, which invokes the 2-year rule.

Hopefully, the author gets the message and allows the BOT to try and tackle more important issues. Other than that, I agree with most of what you posted.

David M. - Area 12 New Jersey

P.S. - Thanks for the kind words.

Gamblers Anonymous - A Fellowship

4/24/09 - 3:39 PM

Dear current trustees and past trustees of our life saving Fellowship,

In October 2008 I wrote an article for the Upstate New York mini-conference held in Alexandria Bay, New York. This article is not GA approved literature but the thoughts come from my 44 years within the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous and are not meant to offend any other Gamblers Anonymous member. The title of the article was:

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS---A FELLOWSHIP.

Gamblers Anonymous originally adoped the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1957. Jim W. - our founder-- knew of the A.A. 12 Steps of Recovery, and the A.A. 12 Traditions, and with some changes in wordage adapted the A.A. program and some A.A. literature by simply changing the word "alcohol" to "gambling." Except for removing the word "suggested" from the preface to the Recovery Program and changing the word "aotonomous" to "self-governing" in Unity Step four, the Twelve Steps of Recovery and Twelve Steps of Unity remain the same as originally written in 1957.

Fellowship in Gamblers Anonymous is the foundation and glue that bunds all members together in common purpose.as we travel our individual journies of recovery. The Gamblers Anonymous Fellowship honors equality among all members seeking recovery from a baffling, insidious compulsive addiction, Our common purpose is recovery and carrying the message of hope to compulsive gamblers who still suffer.

In Fellowship, individual members at any level of service do not exert nor impose authority, seek authority, or give themselves authority over fellow members. Those principles are clearly stated in The Gamblers Anonymous Unity Program and The Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code. Our Fellowship is not ruled by personalities or personal opinions. We are guided by the spirit of the "group conscience." Fellowship is freedom of all our individual groups to be "self-governing" except in matters that affect other groups or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole,

"Principles before Personalities: is the way we face and decide our issues. The reverse, "Personalities before Principles" would lead only to conflict and confusion to our common purpose. No member at any level of service, including individual groups, area inter-groups, board of regents, or board of trustees, have authority granted to them within our Guidance Code to control or command other members. Command or control is not acceptable within the framework of a Fellowship. Were there any members who believe command and control is how they should function in securing recovery for themselves and other members then those members should move to dismantle the fellowship and call what we have known for 52 years as a Fellowship to something other

than a Fellowship.

True Fellowship grants freedom to all points of view and is guided by "Spiritual Principles." Gamblers Anonymous identifies those "Spiritual Principles" as kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility. I would add to those spiritual principles the principles of love, tolerance, and compassion. But for now we can strengthen our Unity with all members by practicing kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility as we seek growth for Gamblers Anonymous. Unity always--- Disunity never!

True Fellowship is the opportunity for all who walk through our GA doors to desire and find recovery, regardless of how far they have fallen or the condition they are in when they first enter the GA door. Fellowship is acceptance of all who come to GA for help, Fellowship means no one should be judged by his/her appearance, age, race, religion, sexual orientation. or at first--- their resistance to recovery. MANY compulsive gamblers enter their first GA meetings not having a desire to stop gambling or knowing what a desire to stop gambling means. MANY are forced to come by a spouse, parent, friend, or legal authority. In true fellowship those people are encouraged to stop gambling, encouraged to continue attending meetings. encouraged to work the 12 steps of recovery and unity on a daily basis to the best of their abilities, and encourages them not to give up on recovery but give the program 90 days to take hold and flourish. WE DO NOT DISCOURAGE THOSE MEMBERS STILL IN THE GRIP OF THE ILLNESS--STILL GAMBLING--WHO ATTEND MEETINGS FAITHFULLY--THEY WILL FIND THE DESIRE TO STOP GAMBLING AND MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR THEIR LIVES IF THEY CONTINUE ATTENDING RECOVERY MEETINGS. There are many GA members who have celebrated 10-20-30-40 years of recovery who could not stop gambling when first entering GA. They relapsed but never gave up the effort to find recovery-- they came back to meetings! We did not throw members overboard who had difficulty finding the desire to stop gambling--We threw them a life-preserver--Simply, come back to the meetings!

Fellowship is love and gratitude for our band of brothers and sisters who travel the recovery road with us--side by side--Those are the members who share their experience, strength, and hope with us--Who ask nothing in return-- Which is a huge difference from our gambling "daze" when we were takers-- and users of people--not givers--Who faithfully attend meetings--Who open meeting rooms early--Who make the coffee--Who make phone calls to other members between meetings--Who care about their recovery and the recovery of other members having difficulty finding their way. That sharing and caring is the majesty of the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous

Fellowship is the very spirit of LOVE, Yes, LOVE. Jim W. the founder of Gamblers Anonymous once said that LOVE is the most important spiritual concept in all Gamblers Anonymous meeting rooms. THE LOVE FOR RECOVERY! THE LOVE FOR OUR NEW FOUND FREEDOM! THE LOVE FOR OUR FAMILIES! THE LOVE FOR OUR FELLOW MEMBERS. WARTS AND ALL! THE LOVE FOR THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR FELLOWSHIP! LOVE FOR THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL-- OUR ABILITY TO HELP OTHERS GOD PUTS IN OUR WAY.

Humbly submitted by George W. Watertoen, New York. Past trustee. 1969-1973 N.J.

4/25/09 - 5:43 PM

It is with sentiments like this that has built our program into what it is today or (what it should be). After reading George's submission, I felt humbled at the simple fact that I am part of such a wonderful program, that I contribute on a daily basis to upholding the principles of our program on a very personal level within our rooms. Although many of us feel it and may even share it on a regular basis, seeing it in print re-establishes the essence of the program for me. That simple word is indeed, LOVE. Our founder was right, Love is the core to all happiness and serenity.

Thank you George for putting this on the trustee line. It has given me the spirit needed for Kansas City. When walking into the Trustee meetings on Thursday, my heart will be full of love for program, fellowship and yes, even the AGENDA for I know that we as Trustees will do everything we can to uphold the integrity of our GA program. Whether I am for or against an item, in the end, group consensus will prevail and that is what is truly important.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in a few days, so open your hearts and open your arms because I want a big hug!!!

Working my way through recovery, one day at a time,

Andy R. - Area 13B
Southern New Jersey

Excitement for Recovery

4/26/09 - 7:15 PM
Fellow Members,

I am filled with excitement anytime we are so close to a conference. Not only excitement for the fellowship, but excitement for my own personal recovery. I originally became trustee because I wanted to serve my area and return all the gifts that the fellowship had given to me, but I must admit I feel as though I now go to these conferences to recharge my own GA battery. I enjoy being a representative for area 16, I enjoy the back and forth of the trustee conference room, I enjoy speaking in front of my fellow trustees on a topic I am passionate about (whether it passes or not), but most of all I enjoy the time I spend at dinner or sitting in the hotel lobby or even standing around in the corridors of the hotel absorbing the knowledge of sooooo many years of recovery. Gamblers Anonymous has changed my life and continues to make me want to be a better me, a better father, a better brother, a better everything. So if I forget over the next week to say thank you to all of you for making my life better, THANK YOU in advance for sharing your precious gift with me.

May we all be blessed by our higher powers as we embark on our journeys from the far reaches of the country and beyond. I hope to see all of you so soon in good health and good spirits. May we be guided in all our decisions by the 12 steps of Recovery and Unity to find what is truly right for our fellowship. Thank you to all of you for being so important in my life.

Your brother in recovery,

Matt H - Area 16 Trustee Upstate NY
