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**Trustee Line for August 2009**

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A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 8/31/09.

**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.

**Possible New Online Agenda Platform**

8/1/09 - 12:01 AM

I recently had the opportunity to speak with a GA member who is a past Trustee about the upcoming Montreal agenda. Without any prompting, he asked if there were more items about making a word bold, or underlining, or making a should to a would, etc. Naturally, he got me started about how I personally feel we waste so much time over these petty issues at the Trustee meetings. The best example of that for me was trying to change unsolvable to insolvable, or was it insolvable to unsolvable. I would much rather agenda items take a bold stance on a radical idea and have it heard and voted on, than the droning, uninspired and just downright frustrating items involving the minor tweakings of the Combo Book.

That brings me to the point of this Trustee Line submission. I believe the grammar, spelling and syntax changes for any of our approved literature at the first vote should not be allowed at any physical meeting for the first vote. These should be done through an online platform spaced out in between physical meetings. If the items are truly unpopular, then let's get that out of the way without wasting valuable time in a physical meeting. I ask that everyone who reads this look at the GA Reference Material link (3rd one from the top on the left) and click through the results of all the items that have failed in the Combo Book. The vast majority of them fail on ratios of 10:1 and some even higher and that is for all the Combo Book items that fail, not just the ones that involve formatting, grammar and syntax

In the simple overview, a current member of the Board of Trustees would submit such an item, which the Chairman of the BOT would approve for listing on the online platform. Naturally, the Chairman has to decide if the item warrants inclusion on this online platform. If not, then it would be allowed as an item for the regular physical Trustee meeting. If yes, then it gets posted on the online agenda. Here are my thoughts about how this could get done:

- Item submitted
- Item approved for listing by the BOT Chair
- Item is posted for review
- The item is not subject to any amendments
- The online agenda will be open to the public for viewing only
- Every Trustee will have the ability to login and put in their comments about each item and vote Yes, No, or unfortunately, Abstain.
- The online agenda will be open for 10 days in order to give everyone a chance to login and add commentary and vote.
- Each Trustee will have the ability to modify their commentary and also change their vote up until the end of the 10 day period.
- The running vote totals will appear, without the display of how each Trustee actually voted.
- There will be a link for each item to show which Trustees have not voted yet, in an effort to have the area members 'help' get the Trustees to vote. By the way, members who do not have access to the Internet, surely can go to someone's house, office, or public library to reflect their votes on each item.
- Should any of the Trustees have a question about any item, they will have the ability, as they do now, to email or call the Trustee who submitted the item to provide an answer. Obviously, if a Trustee submitted an item on behalf of a non-Trustee GA member that gets listed on the online agenda, then it will be that Trustee's responsibility to get answers from the non-current Trustee GA member who gave it to the Trustee for addition to the online agenda.
- If the item fails, then it is under the conditions of the 2-year rule.
- If the item passes online, then it is brought to the next physical Trustee meeting for a second vote, just to make sure that all the attending Trustees get a chance to really look the item(s) over.
- If the item fails the second vote, then the same conditions of the 2-year rule are in effect, just like any other item.

This entire process came out of an idea I had to allow current Trustees to voice their unofficial opinions about how they felt on EVERY item on the rolling agenda via a similar online voting procedure, but open for the entire time the rolling agenda was open to submissions. This would serve as an early indicator for the Trustees, as to what to expect at the physical Trustee meeting, but only as an unofficial gauge of sentiment. It would allow each participating Trustee to ask questions of the author, put their own comments for all to see, and finally show whether or not they were in favor of the item or not. By fielding the questions prior to the actual meeting, the Trustees would be better prepared and possibly not ask as many questions as normal during the physical meeting. It might even cut back on the discussion time of each item if the Trustees didn't have to worry about where they felt the voting might lean toward.

I presented this idea to the current BOT Chair, who did not feel it was suitable to put on the website without prior approval by the BOT. The website guidelines covering this are as follows:

*The Trustee Website will be under the control of a standing Trustee Website committee made up of either current or past Trustees, 2 of which must have website programming experience. The committee will maintain the content and administrate the Trustee website. It will also give reports at each Trustee meeting of new additions and modifications that the committee would like to have approved for deployment on the Trustee website. Any such changes may be showcased between Trustee meetings for the members to use in order to help render a more informed decision by the B.O.T. at the next physical meeting, regarding an approval or denial of the new changes. During that period, the committee will be under the guidance of the Chair of the B.O.T. as to appropriateness of the new features that are pending B.O.T decisions.*

Naturally, I completely disagree with the Chair's decision on this, as it is permitted by the Trustee website guidelines. Evidently, the interpretation of that is not quite as clear to some as it is to others. No disrespect intended, but in the end, it is the Chair's discretion as to the appropriateness of the new features pending BOT decisions, irrespective of his interpretation of the guidelines. As committee chair, the BOT Chair's decision will be respected. By the way, you will all hear the details of how this new idea works and why it will help to streamline the future agenda, once the website report is given in Montreal. It will hopefully receive the acceptance of the Trustees for trial deployment on the site. Additionally, there is a motion in place to 'clear' up any further disputes in how the Trustee website guidelines are interpreted.

Getting back to the online agenda, I would love to hear what everyone has to say about this proposal by responding to this item in the Trustee Line. If it receives support, it will take some fancy programming of the site to get it

done, so this will be a while in development. Please step up and respond one way or another, even if someone has already said what you feel about it. Additions to the procedures outlined above, modifications of any step, etc, are all welcome, just let me know.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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8/3/09 - 5:35 PM

Speaking as a Trustee and not a member of the Website Committee (full disclosure: which I am), I am 100% in agreement with David's proposal.

Ed K. - Area 1 Trustee, Los Angeles

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8/4/09 - 12:40 AM

If we had better participation in the Trustee Line this idea might have some merit. However, at this time I don't believe the percentage of trustees that participate would ever constitute a quorum. We need to take care that we are not creating a means for a small majority to rule.

Carol K. - Area 9, Michigan

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8/4/09 - 1:04 PM

Hi, Joe B here, with regards to David M's posting on Possible New Online Platform, I don't feel it is such a radical idea, and I do believe that some of the items should be removed from the agendas before we get to the Trustee meeting. I sent into the Trustee Line back in Sept '06, (See Below for that posting) the results of the items that failed that there were counts for. We didn't at that time count all votes.

[How to use the Trustee Website to speed up the BOT meetings](#)

[September 7, 4:12 PM](#)

Hi Guys,

I would like to see the Trustee Website used to get a "look see" before going to the meeting on how the Trustees feel on the agenda items. This can be done by having a poll taken to determine the Trustees opinions on each item, how they would vote on them. There were 14 items that failed in Boston, in April '06, of these 14, 10 had vote counts next to them and 8 of them had more than 70% 'NO VOTES' (below are the numbers) If we took a poll vote before the Trustee meeting on the Web Site, it may have showed that some of these items may not make it. The person or persons submitting them would see this and may chose to have it dropped or no discussion on the. This can save TIME for items that need to be heard.

Unfinished Bus.

#12...53 %

New Business

#19...96%

#25...96%

#26...85%

#28...57%

#29...78%

#36...99%

#37...97%

#42...96%

#48...77%

Joe B- Area 6 C

Now I would like to take the old email and go a step further, and have a MAIL MEETING, say 10 to 12 days after the agenda deadline, and if an item doesn't get a 70% favorable vote it is dropped from the final agenda. If we have a mail meeting we would have a Quorum, and also an agenda that we can give full time to.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

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8/4/09 - 1:14 PM

I think this an interesting idea that probably could work. However, that said, I agree with Carol that there is clearly not enough Trustees that participate with this website, so you would have a small group control the decisions for the entire BOT, which defeats our purpose of being a group.

Steve F. - Area 1, Los Angeles

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8/4/09 - 4:21 PM

Hi Guys, I no sooner finish sending my posting with the Radical idea of having a Mail Trustee meeting online to eliminate items that would have no way in hell on passing, and I come back a few hours later and see a posting from Arnie B. for Joe K, Area 8...requesting to change the Combo Book on Pg 3 from 'ARE' to

'WERE'. No way would I ever thing about voting yes for this item, there could be nothing that could be said when it comes to the floor that would change my mind.

I am a COMPULSIVE GAMBLER, will always be one. I just don't practice gambling anymore. I must not lose sight of this fact. If I do, I could go back to the disaster of the BET. I have to always remember that I'm only one BET away from it, that being DISASTER, again.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

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8/4/09 - 7:04 PM

I like the idea a lot. I truly believe it would be a great time saver, and maybe the time is right. If the Trustees know that their votes will keep or reject an item for discussion at the next meeting, don't you think they would make an effort to be responsible to do their part?

We are all aware that not everyone has a computer; we are aware that computers do break down from time to time; but if we all knew we had to vote from x/xx/xx to x/xx/xx, can't we find time to go to a library or friend's house/relative's house and get the job done?

I agree with Carol and Steve that perhaps not enough people read and/or respond to the Trustee Line, but if a small group were by any chance to impact a significant vote, wouldn't more Trustees be ready the next time? Let's just hope so.

With love, faith and respect in our Fellowship,

Linda S, Area 3A Trustee - San Diego

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8/29/09 - 9:42 AM

I really like David's idea. I read the trustee line but don't always respond. I believe that there are others out there like me that may read but not respond. If there was something for me to vote on however I would vote. I have in the past.

Leanne W. - Area 7 Trustee, Louisiana

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8/29/09 - 11:59 AM

In regards to the Online Agenda Platform, I like this idea, this would allow the Trustees to give more time and effort to the important issues that help shape and change the program for the better. This may also leave more time for the Trustees to do other things like, area GA meetings and work shops.

JR E. - Area 5A, Nova Scotia, Canada

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<b>Trustee Meetings in the Same Location</b>
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8/1/09 - 12:01 AM

I'd like to walk on the minefield of having our Trustee meetings in the same hotel each time we have our meetings. I'm talking about no national conference, just an all business Trustee meeting starting early on a Friday morning and finishing at a specific time on Saturday evening, twice a year, every year.

Do we really need the pomp and circumstance of the opening and closing ceremonies? Do we really need to make everyone crazy with tasks in the hosting area? Do we really need to play this game of how much money we will make or lose depending on the turnout? The answer is clearly no.

My suggestion is this. We meet at a hotel in Chicago, which is central to just about everyone in the US and Canada. It is a major destination city for all airlines, which makes airfares cheaper.

We work our Trustee meeting schedule as follows:

Friday - 1st day:

Meeting starts at 9:00 AM

Break for lunch at 11:45 AM

Return from lunch at 1:15 PM

Break for dinner at 5:30 PM

Return from dinner at 7:30 PM

Close first day session at 11:00 PM

Saturday - 2nd day:

Meeting starts at 9:00 AM

Break for lunch at 11:45 AM

Return from lunch at 1:15 PM

Close second day session at 6:00 PM

By the way, that 6:00 PM ending time is firm. If there are still items on the agenda, then those items are automatically tabled until the next meeting. This schedule would not require the Trustees to fly in on Wednesdays, as has been

customary in the past. This becomes less of an impact on people who must take of work on Wednesdays to make the AM start of our Thursday meeting starts that we use now.

I'm suggesting this so that we take out the anxiety of putting together a National Conference and just let the Trustees get down to business of being a Trustee. There would be no craziness about securing a bid for a conference site 2 years in advance. No doubt, the hotel we choose would be thrilled to have us and continue to give us good rates all the way around. The one downside of this move would be the loss of the money that ISO gets from the conferences.

So there you have it. Does anyone have any thoughts they want to share with everyone else on this subject?

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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8/3/09 - 8:06 PM

In response to David's suggestion regarding a consistant semi-annual Trustee Meeting (only). I think this is a fantastic idea. I would not like to see this idea eliminate International Conferences altogether. I'm not sure if that was the intetnt. I would still personally like to see one International Conference per year. How that is handled is probably another discussion and so I won't brainstorm here on that. Kudos on the idea David.

Ed K. - Area 1 Trustee, Los Angeles

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8/4/09 - 12:32 AM

The idea of having just a business meeting makes a lot of sense, however, where is the sharing of experience, strenght and hope without the workshops. I would rather see the session start on Saturday and end on Sunday allowing people to attend without taking time off work if it is just the BOT meeting. Many hotels give better deals for weekends if most of their business comes from corporation, as they are usually over 75% empty on the weekend. When I first started going to International Conferences one of the best parts was going to a local meeting. It might be me but I haven't seen that oportunity lately, I am still hopeful.

Carol K. - Area 9, Michigan

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8/4/09 - 2:22 PM

I like what we currently have in place. I am totally against making any changes. I think there is considerable value of having international conferences per year, and I think it's important to have different cities and countries be a host to them. I don't think you can a put a dollar amount in that place. How much we make or lose has never been a requirement. As our Unity Program states, 'Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers'. An international conference reminds me and confirms what the GA program is all about, and that there are people around the world who suffer from the same illness as me. If I would change anything, it would be holding only one conference per year, but I believe this was brought up, and was not received well, because changes to the literature would not be seen for 3-4 years, as agenda items needing a 2nd vote would take a minimum of two years to pass.

As I'm writing this submission for the Trustee Line, I'm thinking that it would be like taking away the cities and countries that host the Olympics. It would take away the spirit, take away the unity, I couldn't imagine it. I know we have no opinion on outside issues, but this is what's going through my mind.

For me personally, I learned the value of being of service and getting involved when I attended my first international conference in 2003. Had it not been for that experience, I'm sure I would not be where I am today.

Steve F. - Area 1, Los Angeles

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8/4/09 - 7:30 PM

Unfortunately, I am not comfortable with this suggestion. I've had to analyze why I feel that way, and I think I agree with Steve. When we counsel new members, we encourage them to go to conferences. Malcolm B and my sponsor told me it would be a valuable experience for my recovery - and they were right.

Perhaps it WAS the 'pomp and circumstance' that appealed at first, but what I learned in addition was of incredible value, and they have been pointed out here: the knowledge I gained as a newcomer in the workshops; looking at a room full of 500 plus people - who all had the same disease as I did, but looked incredibly normal to me; the love and support of one another which was very visible; the hugs and hand-shaking ("good to see you again"); the other stories I heard; the bonding with people from other states and countries; the impact on my recovery; - all priceless to me.

Yes, David, it is probably a very expensive proposition to host an international

conference; yes it is gut-retching to perform this service on a committee (Malcolm was a strong task-master in San Diego 2005); but the rewards of learning, experiencing, self-worth, and pride in a job well done were invaluable. I, too, like going to different cities to meet their members, learn about their lifestyles, all improve me as a person. I'd prefer not to trade that. However, I have also learned to accept the voice of the majority. I am anxious to hear more.

With love, faith and respect in our Fellowship,

Linda S - Area 3A Trustee - San Diego

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8/13/09 - 1:58 AM

Dear Trustee Line,

I read David's idea of having one meeting in the same location every year. I don't understand how Chicago is the center of the US. From where I live, (Burbank, Ca) a flight to Chicago is four hours and one to New York is 5 and a half. So as I see it, Kansas City is more in the middle of the US.

Ok, back to the idea, in theory it sounds great. But for many reasons, I think it will not work and I can't agree more with Linda S's reasons. I always look forward to going to the conferences and meeting people from all over the country and world who have my addiction. Sharing stories, tears, hugs, laughs is the highlight of my recovery.

If it came to a vote, I will definitely vote no and encourage others to also vote it down.

I like most of David's ideas, but not this one, respectfully....

Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

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8/16/09 - 11:02 AM

I agree with David's idea of conducting a business only trustee meeting twice a year on Friday and Saturday. I would like to us to meet in different cities for the spring and fall meeting. Perhaps we could have the spring meeting on the West Coast and the fall meeting on the East Coast. I would like us to use the same location each year if possible. I agree that the hotel may give us a better deal if they know we will give them repeat business every year.

I believe that it would make it easier for our working members who must request vacation time from their employer to attend the trustee meetings.

I would like to see the trustee meetings and national conferences become separate events. We could conduct the trustee meetings on Friday and Saturday at the same time every year. Perhaps we could hold the meeting in early April and October every year.

I do not like the idea of eliminating national conferences.

I suggest we hold one international conference per year rotating the location around the country. I suggest holding the conference every spring at least one month before or after the trustee meeting. This would allow some space between the trustee meeting and the conference.

Greg M. - Trustee Area 13, Philadelphia

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8/29/09 - 12:15 PM

In regards to having the meeting in the same location, I like idea but can see how this would change a lot of things. Money for ISO, the Fellowship taking the hardest hit.

Maybe have on International Conference with the BOT, and the other just the BOT in a central location with no conference, this may help the attendance at the International Conferences. This would cut in half the effort that is involved in putting together 2 International conferences. Adding this to the idea of the online agenda Platform would be a huge step in growing this program. I once heard in the rooms 'If nothing changes, nothing changes.'

JR E. - Area 5A, Nova Scotia, Canada

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**Should the Trustee Allowance and Realignment committee proceed or dissolve?**

8/1/09 - 12:01 AM

In Kansas City, this committee distributed a Committee Report showing the results of the survey taken from the Houston conference. Based upon those results, is it your opinion that this committee should proceed with recommendations for a unified Trustee allowance calculation, and therefore an agenda item, at the Louisville conference? Or, do you think this committee is not needed and therefore suggest that the committee be dissolved (at the Montreal conference)?

8/1/09 - 10:03 AM

I'm glad Ed brought this subject up. As they say in Cape Kennedy - 'Shoot or get off the pad'. Essentially, don't just stand there, do something.

The BOT absolutely needs to have this restructuring. We are sitting on a system that is old and unjust. We should be treating our Trustee assignments similar to the US House of Representatives. Instead of using population as a criteria, we should use rooms within each area. I don't believe we should be worried about having too many Trustees, but we should worry about having a disproportional numbers of Trustees from each area.

I was very much against the original proposal Marc L. submitted in Portland in the Spring '08, which was this:

Reapportion the Trustees allocations based on the number of meetings in any particular Area. Each Area will have at least one Trustee. Areas with 21-40 meetings will be allocated one additional Trustee, Areas with 41-60 meetings will be allocated two additional Trustees, Areas with 61-80 meetings will be allocated three additional Trustees, and Areas with 81-100 meetings will be allocated four additional Trustees. No Area will have more than 5 Trustees. Reapportionment to take effect at the Spring 2010 International Conference.

The conference in Louisville will be the time for the next realignment, and judging by the tone of the item submitted by Ed above, we won't have anything to act upon in time to make a new procedure effective.

Too many areas have too few Trustees. Likewise, there are areas with too many Trustees. My area is one with too many. We have been allocated 6 and we should only have 4. Let me lay out why that is and the structure of a new system for adjusting our Trustee numbers and in the process shortening our bi-annual Trustee Realignment Process.

- 1) - Every area should have allocations of 1 Trustee for every 10 rooms that meet on a regular weekly basis, with a minimum of 2 for each area. That number gets set every 2 years. If an area has 57 meetings, they get 5 Trustees. If after the realignment meeting they grow to 73 meetings, the area must wait for the allocation of an additional 2 Trustees until the next realignment meeting.
- 2) - It will be completely up to the area to elect as many of the Trustees as they wish, up to the authorized allocation.
- 3) - If the area cannot afford to elect all their Trustees, they should seriously consider a geographic realignment to split the current area up, and either create new smaller areas, or confer with surrounding areas to change the existing boundaries between them.

I remember recently hearing that areas like Las Vegas, Area 3, have over 90 meetings. They would be allocated 9 Trustees, but the reality is that the area feels that 4 Trustees are sufficient to handle the responsibilities. That would be entirely the area's choice. No doubt, it would be financially unbearable to fund 9 Trustees to 2 conferences a year. I also remember Chicago and its surrounding areas, Area 8, has at one point over 120 meetings. Yes, that would mean 12 Trustees would be allocated under the new system, yet they have only 4. Their area has over the years changed their geographic area to make the job of covering the areas a bit less onerous.

My only point is that it is time we leveled the playing field for every area. Areas should be given the opportunity to be represented with equal weighting. Many areas could expand their representation, if they so desired, and areas like mine, New Jersey - Area 12 would get its allocation cut back by one-third, because we have 40 rooms, so we would go from 6 Trustees down to 4. This is not a self-serving issue for me, but one of pure principles.

After writing this with only 8 days to go on the Montreal agenda, I'm going to now submit an agenda item to put this in the Guidance Code, and not wait for the Committee to decide if it wants to put out another useless survey. My apologies to the committee for that apparent slap in the face, but we need to move on this and not waste any more time with actions that get us no closer to a workable solution. Whether or not my item gets approved, as least we are going to try to make equitable Trustee realignment a reality.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

**Pen Pals Requested**

8/2/09 - 12:38 PM

Greetings fellow trustees:

At the suggestion of Mike M, the Chair of our U.S. Prison Committee, I am writing to ask if there is anyone out there who might like to be another pen pal for a fellow gambler in prison. The young man I am corresponding with has just celebrated his 35th birthday, but is "in" for life. (My correspondence shall continue.)

Should you be so inclined, you may certainly contact me by phone or email - both of which are included on the listing of Trustees sent to us by Karen at ISO. Thank you.

With love, faith and respect in our Fellowship,

Linda S, Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

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<b>Intergroup Treasuries</b>
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8/4/09 - 4:07 PM

Greetings, Fellow Trustees,

I would appreciate some guidance and/or opinions on the topic of Intergroup treasury.

In the September, 2007 issue of the Trustee Line Kathy M, Area 8, asked what is an appropriate amount for a large intergroup to keep in it's treasury. Unfortunately, it seems no one responded to her question, at least not through the Trustee Line.

I am submitting the question anew.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Quebec.

Your friend in recovery,  
John B. - Trustee, Area 13, Philadelphia

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8/13/09 - 2:05 AM

Our intergroup in Los Angeles recently has been struggling financially since we broke off with Orange County. We needed to really push our Bowlathon fundraiser to raise money for trustees to go to the conferences this year. With that said, I remember our treasury always had a good balance. Many years ago when I just started going to intergroup, I believe we made a one time donation to the ISO when we had too much money. I may be wrong, but that is what I remember, and the amount was about \$1,000.

It is a touchy question and each group should do what they think is right for their area.

Ara H. - Area 1 Trustee, Los Angeles

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<b>Unity</b>
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8/5/09 - 1:57 PM

To All current members and past Trustees of the BOT:

Without unity of purpose and mutual respect between all members (whether those members serve at our individual group level, or serve at the intergroup level, or serve at the level of the BOT, or serve at the level of the BOR) we risk falling into the trap of individual personalities becoming more important than the spiritual principles we are asked to honor. The Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous in the Guidance Code defines itself as a Spiritual Fellowship based on democratic principles.

We may have differences of opinion regarding the changes that affect Gamblers Anonymous as a whole but those differences are not aided for solution or compromise by animosity, anger, or "my way or the highway" attitudes.

We are all together on this ship, The "U.S.S. Recovery" and it serves no purpose to attack the past history of Gamblers Anonymous as being outmoded or inconsequential to the problems we face today. The one constant thing that does not change is the illness of compulsive gambling. It serves no positive purpose to disrespect or tear down what has served sick compulsive gamblers very well over the years and was there for all of us when we first arrived at the Gamblers Anonymous door for help, A famous philosopher, Santayana said; "Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it." I say; "Those who mock the past cannot learn from it."

The current members of the BOT are not meant to be politicians, nor in terms of government, The House of Representatives. Our leaders are but trusted servants, They do not govern. The individual trustees serve the members they represent and are responsible to those members who elected them to uphold the principles that truly guide and hold our fellowship together.

The Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code in section 8, Board of Trustees, clearly states: "The trustees are to act as the guardians of the Twelve Steps Of Recovery and Twelve Steps Of Unity and must be guided by those precepts in making all their decisions." Guardian is defined as "defenders" "protectors" and "keepers." Some may take these thoughts as radical thinking, or merely naive or out of date, but in the freedom guaranteed to all individual Gamblers



Anonymous, I submit them for your consideration and feedback.

The enemy we all face is the illness of compulsive gambling. Gamblers Anonymous describes this illness as a baffling, insidious, compulsive addiction. This illness reclaims a large percentage of our membership back to active gambling which we call a relapse.

There is little our fellow hip can do to force or convince active compulsive gamblers to stop gambling. We offer them a choice, To gamble, or, not to gamble. We encourage new members to make meetings, make meetings, and make more meetings. We encourage new members to work rg 12 Steps of Recovery and Unity in their lives on a daily basis to the best of their abilities. We encourage new members after 45 days to have a pressure group meeting. We encourage new members to make phone calls to other members between meetings. The bottom line is we care about new members (and old members) as others cared for us in the beginning of our recoveries. We care and share our experience, strength, and hope asking for nothing in return.

Recovery, as individuals should be our highest priority. Unity, for the benefit of all members of Gamblers Anonymous and the continued existence of our fellowship should become our highest priority. Without Unity--there is no fellowship!

To those trustees who believe that they have been granted authority or have authority to impose restrictions or forms of censorship on the freedoms the Guidance Code guarantees to individual members or groups--who believe that individual Gamblers Anonymous groups being self-governing is harmful--who believe that the trustees should make all the decisions for Gamblers Anonymous without consulting with the members who elected them--or believe they can change the content of the Recovery and Unity Steps without consulting all groups within the fellowship for approval have been misled as to what their true function was meant to be. That function is to act as temporary guardians of the good and welfare of our life-saving fellowship and defend it against all enemies. Sometimes the enemy is US.

I use the word "temporary" as being a trustee is not a life-time position--nor self-appointed-- nor annointed. Trustees are elected to serve those who have elected them--certainly not to advance any personal agendas or being islands unto themselves.

Yours in recovery, unity, kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility

George W. - Past Trustee Area 16, Upstate NY

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8/5/09 - 4:15 PM

It's no secret that I speak my mind about everything. Nobody every described me as bashful. I'm active with ideas for the Trustee agendas, committees, and just about anything I can help with. This is how I give back to this Fellowship. Although I would like to comment on all the items that are on this issue of the Trustee Line, I was most moved to do so by what George wrote.

What I have found in the years of seeing the submissions from George is that we come from different sides of the equation. I don't approach the job of Trustee in the same manner that George writes about recovery and other highlighted items when he submits items to the Trustee Line. He apparently is far more the diplomat that I am, because seldom has he mentioned names in his references, while I respond to people by name.

I am going to respond to many statement he made in his item just above, which might cause you to have to print out his submission to post side-by-side next to mine, if you care to do so.

We are not recovery androids. We each have our individual personalities, which makes this program more robust. Granted, we should all agree on the items of the Guidance Code and the decisions of the Board of Trustees, but the reality is that each vote is NOT unanimous. It takes only a simple majority to pass decisions by the BOT and a 2/3 majority for items for the Guidance Code and the Steps. What do we say to those that dissent from the majority vote? Shut up...your opinion is different than the majority? I would hope not. Challenging our Fellowship is what improves it. It also allows us the all the platform to exercise honesty, openmindedness and willingness. Minority opinions also serve to keep people on their toes and make others think about situations and things that might otherwise get swept under the rug because they did not conform to the majority. I say bravo to those who understand what is in place and follow it, but still have the strength of conviction to make the rest of us aware of a potential better mousetrap. Those with the dissenting opinions, might be a bit too militant with their stances. To that I say, bravo diversity.

I take great exception to George's notion that 'it serves no purpose to attack the past history of Gamblers Anonymous as being outmoded or inconsequential to the problems we face today'. To the contrary, it is exceedingly important to update the program wherever possible. Case in point is to look at the vast majority of our literature. It is grossly outdated and is having an increased level of irrelevance with the younger members that come through the GA

doors. We stress that members should relate not compare. Show me a new member that has dreams of providing his friends with world tours, mink coats, yachts, etc.

The same goes for the Guidance Code. What was in place years ago that we are still required to deal with, is full of holes and inconsistencies. The prime example of this is Article 8, Section 4: Any Trustee is automatically removed from office for gambling by his/her own admission. Current of past Trustees who return to gambling and subsequently come back to G.A. should not have a voice at the BOT meeting until they have 2 years of abstinence, the same qualification as becoming a Trustee. Gambling, for the compulsive gambler is defined as follows: Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or "skill" constitutes gambling. Or he or she may be removed for other acts on his or her part, which are detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, or for not attending Gamblers Anonymous meetings. Removal requires 2/3 vote for expulsion by the Board of Trustees at the next physical meeting of the Board of Trustees.

I'm pointing to the last 2 sentences in this section.

- What is a detrimental act?
- Who makes that determination to even accuse a Trustee of such behavior?
- How does this situation get from the detrimental act, to a vote for expulsion by the BOT?

What about this, Article VII - Groups, Section 1: Whenever two or more persons with a desire to stop gambling meet together on a regular, weekly scheduled basis to discuss their gambling problem, they will be known as a group, only if they commit themselves to follow Gamblers Anonymous' Guidance Code and limit their use, display and distribution to only approved and appropriate Gamblers Anonymous literature. They are also to notify the International Service Office (I.S.O.) of their existence.

Okay, a room decides to ignore this and displays literature from the Council on Compulsive Gambling.

- Who is supposed to make the official determination that this is happening?
- Another GA member?
- A trusted servant of Intergroup?
- A Trustee?
- How does this get resolved locally?
- If the basics requirements for being recognized as a room are not met, then what do we do to unrecognized a room?

This needs to be fixed and it does emphasize that what was done years ago is outdated and actually incomplete.

I also get really irritated at references that our leaders are but trusted servants and they that they do not govern, and hanging that on the Board of Trustees like we are outlaws and many other things. George, Red Book, Page 54, Unity Step 2. Read past the actual step heading.

**'OUR LEADERS ARE BUT TRUSTED SERVANTS; THEY DO NOT GOVERN.**

Gamblers Anonymous relies primarily on group conscience to keep it functioning. Leaders with the Fellowship are entrusted to carry out the will and conscience of the group. They have assigned responsibilities but they act only within the authority granted to them by the group.

We shall be held responsible if we elect irresponsible Trusted Servants who cannot serve the group in the manner determined by the "Ultimate Authority" which is the spiritual concept of "Group Conscience". They are not elected to command, order, demand, change, alter but simply to serve and express the opinions determined by the group through a conscious consideration of opinions expressed by all members of that group. Trusted Servants in each group are rotated, so that each of us may be reminded and remember that we serve for the good of all, without authority over anyone.

Ego and pride tend to become lost if one listens to the Group conscience. Acceptance is the spirit and trait which can carry one through.'

That's the best description I can find for how the BOT operates.

Moving to the Trustees being the Guardians of the Steps, we are. Go to the Reference Material link on the left margin of the site and download the past Trustee meeting minutes. If you look at proposed changes to the Steps, you will see that they fail by overwhelming majorities. They are sacrosanct and the Trustees are most definitely guided by that.

What George addresses to the Trustees in the next to last paragraph is a leap of faith that is unfounded and a misrepresentation of what actually happens with the Board of Trustees. The BOT has been entrusted to perform a duty. It is physically impossible and impractical to actively incorporate the rooms. The agenda process is filled with procedural issues that changes the items initially posted to the agenda. Are the Trustees supposed to not vote on anything if it differs from what was posted to allow time for those changes to be reflected

to the areas the Trustees serve? When they go back to the meeting 6 months later and someone makes another change are we to once again go back 1 year after the original item was submitted? I would hope the answer gets a resounding NO.

Lastly, no positions are for life. It wouldn't be a problem if the areas had people prepared to run for the office of Trustee. The more nominees that accept the nominations for Trustees, the greater the selection potential for the areas voting on those Trustees. My feeling is when an area gets tired of any Trustee, they can vote that Trustee out - period the end. When Intergroup members are apathetic about the process, then they have no grounds upon which to complain about things never changing.

In closing, I applaud any GA member who makes the effort to try and change any part of the program and the Fellowship. Group conscience always rules. The BOT is not controlled by anyone. Some Trustees are 'human beings' and too few Trustees are 'human doings'. If the Trustees didn't encounter all the egos and self-appointed GA gurus in the rooms, we wouldn't have these constant threats to Unity. But when members continue to do things their way because they think what they want to do is beneficial for everyone else, without it being either approved or appropriate, then what George writes about in his submission becomes more relevant, but focused on the people who think they are the GA experts.

I'm sure I speak for other Trustees that I am fed up with members who have a lot of time in the program who deliberately don't follow the Guidance Code, and do so defending their actions with a level of arrogance that is completely inappropriate and poisonous to the fabric of the room and the temperament of the dictates of the Fellowship. No wonder we get called the GA Police.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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8/6/09 - 8:43 AM

Greetings to all Trustees,

I have been to every trustee meeting since Montreal 2000. As a Trustee, Past Trustee and Co- Chair of the BOT. I have participated at every one of these meetings and have been prepared to do the service I was elected to do.

George W's entry to the trustee line is so vastly different to what I have experienced at Trustee meetings.

George insinuates in his second paragraph that there is 'animosity, anger or a my way or the highway' attitude surrounding these proceedings. I have found that to be a FALSE statement.

I have seen passionate members discuss the issues that other members have put on a Trustee agenda. I have seen some prepared Trustees, and not so prepared Trustees. I have seen Group Conscience prevail. I have seen NO inventory taking. No grudges, No animosity, just passion. And have NEVER seen or heard any Trustee take the 'my way or the highway' attitude!!

Another issue that arises from this, in my mind, is Where do these generalities and innuendos come from? What would make a member believe that the my way or the highway attitude exists? I would like these statements to be backed up by firsthand FACTS! Please state chapter and verse and back up these allegations.

In his next paragraph he talks about 'attack on the past history of GA', and 'tearing down' and 'disrespect to the past'. This is so different to my observations. I have seen nothing but the utmost respect given to this fellowship. I have NEVER seen attacks on the history. I see quite the contrary, and can prove it. I see Trustees trying to Preserve and Protect the 12 Steps of Recovery and Unity. I see true caring to preserve the history, see the conference book from the 50 year anniversary, and the item to make it approved literature. I find your statements totally disrespectful to the trustees who serve on committees, look for ways to improve our fellowship, work diligently, and set examples, and abide by group conscience.

Now to the paragraph about trustees who believe they have been granted the authority to impose restrictions and censorship

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT????? Please be specific!!! WHO are you talking about???

That statement is ludicrous to me!!! I have not seen it anywhere. So please do not insinuate that it exists, because that causes real problems.

Please remember that Trustees are also members of this life-saving fellowship. They are elected by other members to do specific duties. Not carrying out those duties would be a breach to the members and they ought to resign, if they choose not to carry out those responsibilities.

I thank the Trustees for all their hard work and diligence. I am grateful that the Trustees take their responsibilities seriously. And I know the 12 Steps of

Recovery and Unity are in good hands.

So George, you have every right to disagree, that's the beauty of the fellowship, but you DO NOT have the right to spread rumors, make generalities, and paint every Trustee with one long brush, with no facts.

Peace in Recovery

Richie S. - Area 6, South Florida

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8/10/09 - 7:47 PM

To my fellow Trustees and to my brother, George W.

I am a tad saddened by all comments; and perhaps there is some sense of guilt in my feelings, as well. I have never met a Trustee who hasn't had the best of intent in giving back to our Program. Are some misguided, or working under a different perception? Perhaps. Are all Trustees 'doers'? No. But I don't think that makes them bad. Just like members, Trustees do what they feel they can do best - and that is okay. I can't sit in judgment of anyone - who am I to judge?

I have made suggestions for changes, updating, correcting, but never with the intent of harming GA or saying it wasn't doing its job. My perspective was the younger newcomer who does not relate to some statements - and George, that is okay. It is their prerogative to think differently than I do. When Trustees raise an agenda item - their intent is to 'help' the Program be a better Program for all. Ford Motor Company changes the design of their cars every year; we add Amendments to our Constitution to reach out to others and form a better 'union.' Many corporations update their policies and procedures manual frequently throughout the operation of a company. My question is why should GA stay in the 50's? I am not dishonoring the past. It worked back them.....and very well. We do have a 40-year history and we will have a 50-year history - and hopefully, we will have a 200-year history but by heaven's sake, I hope it's not the same.

If an agenda item is defeated, the Trustees I know have accepted the defeat and gone on - to do more work for the program. They honor the will of the majority. The Trustees I have spoken with and gotten to know over the years have varying approaches to their memberships. Most get the agenda to their meetings or to their Intergroups and ask for suggestion, opinions, recommended changes, deletions, additions. What those group members do with that agenda cannot be 'controlled' by the Trustee representing that area. And what other Trustees do with that information is not my responsibility. I can only control what I do - as a Trustee, as a Trusted Servant, and how I represent my members.

Do I wish from time to time that it would be different? Absolutely! The 'Day at a Time' on October 13th tells me that 'My progress in recovery depends in large measure on my attitude, and my attitude is up to me.' And on October 15 it tells me, 'All too often I unwittingly set standards for others in the GA Program. Worse yet, I expect those standards to be met.' As I listen to this advice, as I read this advice, and as I reflect on this advice, I try to remember every day that it is up to me to pay attention, grow and learn from others about doing the right thing - not the 'Linda' thing. Thanks for listening.

With love, faith and respect in our Fellowship

Linda S. - Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

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<b>Group Contributions to ISO vs. Can Contributions</b>
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8/10/09 - 10:31 AM

Dear Trustees.

There seems to be some confusion in the rooms I attend in South Florida, and I attend many. I am going to assume the same confusion might be in your area also. And that confusion has to do with Group contributions to ISO vs. Can contributions.

When I go into a room with NO can, I ask 'Where is the ISO can?' And the response has always been. 'We contribute on a room level.' I then go into the explanation to the room of the difference between the 2 contributions. I let them know that the CAN is a direct personal contribution for the individual member, While the Group contribution comes right from the treasury.

We as Trustees need to explain to every room the differences. When I look in the Bulletin and see 1/10 of the rooms send in anything from a can, I wonder if your areas have the same confusion?

We also need to improve the sharing with rooms on what ISO does and the need for ALL groups to contribute to it, if it is all possible. We as Trustees have this knowledge first hand and need to continually explain to ROOMS, Inter-Groups and Members the importance of this, as we are self- supporting.

We as Trustees need to lead by example. The percentage of room contributions is approx. 8%. I did not make this up, it is there for all to see in each and every bulletin.

And while I am at it, I notice that only 18 inter-groups contribute to ISO, that also is listed in the bulletin. That is extremely sad, in my opinion. I think we have 50 Intergroups in the US, and I think it is the Trustees responsibility to make groups, members and intergroups aware of the need for participation in ALL our avenues of contributions.

Please respond and let us know what goes on in your area.

Thanks so much  
Richie S - Area 6, South Florida

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8/13/09 - 1:45 AM

At my home meeting, we have an ISO can AND we contribute at the group level. So we have the option of donating to the can, or through the room as a group contribution. After every meeting we discuss the importance of being a Lifeliner, so the new members will know they can contribute on a monthly basis also and make it a tax deductible contribution.

In my area, when I go to different meetings as a trustee. I see the ISO can at almost all the meetings. If I don't see one, I ask and get all kind of responses, from "What is an ISO can" to we give on the meeting level, to we chose not to donate. It becomes real hard to "educate" these people and sometimes I get some resentments.

I have traveled to other states and some meetings don't even know what an ISO nor a lifeliner is, so I educate them. (and one of those meetings has the ISO can today).

I do my best to get the word out on how the ISO needs money and will continue to do so.

Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

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<b>1 Yearly Trustee Meeting Instead of 2</b>
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8/20/09 - 12:17 AM

Hello everyone

I have been thinking about the subject of going from 2 yearly conferences to only 1. After much debate in the area rooms the consensus is one yearly conference makes a lot of sense in the economic world we are living in today. The cost of conference fees, travel, and lodging has spiraled out of control over the years and after checking with other fellowships in the country most have only annual meetings with a business meeting scheduled during a weekend retreat between the scheduled conferences. The annual conference would be more affordable for all areas and would not restrict the running of the fellowship in anyway. The dates could be more flexible and the trustees would not be required to use their personal vacation time to attend the events. This is just an opinion from a Trustee who has attended many conferences would like to attend many more. Many members have stated the costs have stopped them from seeking the trustee positions and I feel that we tell members to participate and become involved but also we preach financial responsibility. Many members take years to get their finances under control and many meet the 2 yr requirements but not the financial requirement to do the job properly.

thanks  
Gary G. - Area 6C, North Carolina

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8/20/09 - 5:20 PM

I have read with great interest the various opinions concerning the ongoing debate about frequency of Conferences and Trustee Meetings. My initial opinion was to remain with 2 conferences and 2 trustee meetings as they now exist.

However, reading David's argument and more recently Gary's opinion, I feel we need to make a change. There have always been the remarks that not all areas and not all trustees can afford 2 conferences per year. Recently, the recession in the USA and Canada made this reality more important.

I would like to propose a compromise for at least 1 or 2 years before we take any drastic decision. My compromise is that we have one combined GA and Gamanon International Conference with Trustee and Delegates meeting per year. (Possibly in the fall), and, one GA trustee meeting over a weekend in a central location like Chicago per year. (in the spring) This will result in a saving to all trustees and also ease the pressure of needing 2 areas to host an International Conference every year.

I would like to see an unofficial straw vote taken to gauge the opinions of the

current trustees. Since we have no official procedure for a trustee line opinion vote, perhaps all of you who read this submission can send in your opinion or vote as to whether or not this radical change could happen. If enough members agree, I will put an Agenda item in Kentucky.

Please send in your opinion.

Herb B. - Trustee Area 5, Montreal

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8/20/09 - 10:07 PM

My thanks to Herb for his input on this matter. I agree with the idea and the spring trustee meeting could be held on a weekend which would lower the cost significantly to all in attendance. I feel this could be done and the business of GA could be easily accomplished.

Thanks

Gary G. - Area 6C, North Carolina

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8/20/09 - 11:53 PM

If it were to go to a vote, I would vote against the idea of having one International conference a year. I look forward to each conference where I get to see old friends and make new ones. The thought of having that experience cut back to only once a year scares me.

I am glad to say I am lucky that my intergroup (Los Angeles, Area 1) funds their trustees. Last few conference I am glad to say I returned money back to intergroup after the event. I do understand not all intergroups fund their trustees. One area that doesn't, has cans at every meeting and people donate directly to the trustee travel fund, and now all the trustees from that area go to the conferences and intergroup still does not pay.

Before I was a trustee, I went to many conferences, I flew to Montreal, New York, Connecticut, Vancouver to name a few, at my own expense. Believe me I am not the richest man in GA by far. But I know how to budget. I believe going to the conferences are a very important part of my recovery. So I send in the \$100 deposit, then \$100 a month. By the time the conference comes around, it is paid off.

I know for my first few years I was going to only one meeting a week (as the combo book said at the time) and I was happy. Then I went to my first conference and I found out there was so much more to GA. I planned on going to as many as I can from that day on...

That is only my humble opinion, thanks for letting me share it with you on this forum.

Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

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<b>Montreal Quebec Conference</b>
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8/20/09 - 5:47 PM

Greetings from the Montreal, Quebec, Conference Committee.

There is less than 2 months left until we all meet in Montreal for our next Trustee Meeting. As of today, we have only 60 trustees registered.

The situation becomes very tricky, because, by early September we must decide if we have to release rooms that we have guaranteed and also, we must order the number of meals we will need for the weekend.

The Sheraton Hotel will give us about 10% to 15% leeway, but, with only 60 trustees committed, there may be some people who will not be guaranteed the conference meals and also some people staying at another hotel, or worse, paying about \$50.00 more for their room.

Thanks to all of you who have already booked, however, the rest of you are possibly creating a very costly and frustrating situation. I hope I am overreacting and that everyone who plans to attend the conference will be reserving before the end of August.

There are many members here who are working very hard to assure that everything is ready and that you all have a great conference. All we now need is your commitment to come and help us make it happen.

See you soon,

Herb B. - Area 5  
Montreal, Quebec, Conference Chairman

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