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Trustee Line for June 2008

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From The Trustees

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

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

Response to a few items

6/1/08 - 12:01 AM

Greetings, Friends,
I have been remiss in reading the Trustee Line lately; hence, today I read April and May, and both have 'pushed buttons'.

In April's issue, trustees apparently didn't receive two of the emails I received, one asking for support for a charity, and the other asking us to write-in someone's name on the ballot in Portland.

While I'm against these types of solicitations, I really don't think we should 'throw out the baby with the bath water'. Obviously, some of us need some instruction on the proper use of the Confidential Trustee Listing. The CTL is a good thing, as long as it is not used improperly.

As to the elections of our BOT officers, I have no problem with elections being held by 'Roll Call' votes. Personally, if I support someone, I'll say it. If I have a particular problem with someone for some reason, I'll say that, too. Why do we want to be secretive?

Why are we discussing keeping GA room collections separate from Gam-Anon room collections? Why is money for Gam-Anon being collected in a GA room? Why are Gam-Anon members only putting a dollar into the basket? I'm sure GA members are contributing more. Aren't they? Why are we discussing Gam-Anon on the GA Trustee Line? Why am I even asking these questions?

Should we accept grants to cover the cost of our hotline? Definitely not from private outside sources. However, I wouldn't be surprised if someday the government finally recognizes compulsive gambling to be an addiction, like alcoholism, and wants to look like they care by offering us money. If and when they do, since it's my tax money they're offering us anyway, I say let's take it and put it to good use.

Lastly, kudos to Dina P for her willingness to share her opinions with us, and ask for advice from us. Dina, I knew exactly what you were saying when you talked about members saying 'that's the way it's always been done'. These same members probably also say they attend their one meeting per week, just like the book tells them to. Unfortunately, just because someone has not gambled in many years that doesn't necessarily mean they're in recovery; it just means they haven't gambled in a long time. However, if you try to point out how important change is to one's recovery, they'll remind you how many years they have in GA, which, obviously, makes them right and you wrong. Frustrating, ain't it?

God bless you all, and I hope to see you in Houston.

John B. - Area 13

The future of Trustee meetings

6/7/08 - 5:22 PM

Hello my fellow Trustees,

I've been thinking about this subject sine I became a Trustee. This is now also a minor concern with the advent of the new Trustee Allowance & Realignment committee.

I would like to state up front that this topic is not in any way part of the Trustee Allowance & Realignment scope or efforts. These are my personal thoughts as a G.A. member and a Trustee.

Why do we have Trustee Meetings at the International Conferences twice per year? It seems that with the rising costs of travel and lodging it might be time to have one Trustee Meeting per year. My feeling is that we currently meet and discuss items that are typically not earth shattering (improvements? maybe yes. save the G.A. fellowship from sudden collapse? hardly, in my opinion). Now, some will say: "we need to have two meetings to meet the two vote criteria for this or that type of item". I would say, we can do that on an annual basis. Changes may take longer to get into literature but again, what piece of literature would/could have such a dramatic impact on G.A. that it must be voted on with two passing votes in side of 12 months?

Marc L. spoke of Delegates in Portland. Maybe it is time to consider that Delegates be a part of the process and that they are a smaller group than Trustees. Maybe Delegates meet once a year (Spring or Fall) and the Trustees meet once a year (in the opposite time of year). If the Delegate pool were smaller (i.e. a fixed one or two delegates per area, similar to Senators) the cost of sending Delegates and Trustees to two International Conferences per year would be easier on your area's Intergroup budget (on an annual basis, that is).

So, if anyone has any input as to why it is necessary/critical/imperative that we continue to have two Trustee Meetings per year I will greatly like to hear it. I would also like to hear your thought on what a Delegate pool could/would accomplish to compliment the Trustee meeting process.

With Serenity,
Ed K. - Area 1

6/13/08 - 9:56 PM

To my fellow Trustees,

I cannot begin to tell you how much the trustee meetings have meant for me over the past two years, which is why I felt the need to respond to the idea of once per year meetings. I know that if the trustee meetings were only held once per year, and the conventions were still taking place twice per year, that I could see my fellow brothers and sisters, fellowship and discuss the latest happenings in Gamblers Anonymous. However, I don't think I would have developed the same drive, accountability, and passion for being the best possible trustee I can be. Whether the fellowship is in severe need of trustee meetings two times per year is not as important to me as whether it benefits the fellowship as a whole to keep it going the way it is, and I truly believe it does.

I first became a trustee two years ago and knew very little about the 'trustee process' or what the trustee meetings were all about. Now I have a whole new desire, for recovery, fellowship, and the message of Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, and I owe this to being involved in the trustee meetings. It was being at those meetings that allowed me to meet new people, from all over the world, who shared a similar desire to mine. The meetings also allowed me to develop new relationships, that would last and serve as an inspiration while not at the meetings. Most importantly, the trustee meetings allowed me to give back, through collaboration on new literature, serving on committees, and being responsible to take my position as a trustee seriously. I do not feel like I would have stayed as 'connected' and close as I was by having a trustee meeting one time per year. There is something about that intense amount of time together that makes me want it more and believe in what I am doing more, and I would miss it deeply if it was only once per year.

I know I am so new to recovery and even newer to being a trustee, but I believe that these meetings have changed my entire outlook on recovery, in an entirely positive way. I thank each of you for your friendship, fellowship, and guidance. It is something I carry with me every day.

Your brother in recovery,

Tom S. - Trustee - Area 7A
Houston, Texas

6/16/08 - 11:01 AM

Reading this month's posting on the Trustee Line about having 1 Trustee Meeting per year, and having a Delegate Meeting in place of the second meeting...we currently have 58 Areas. Of those 58, over 40 have two or less Trustees in those Area (some have none). To have a Delegate Only meeting would not help those Areas save money. What we need is a percentage from each Conference, say 20% go through to the next conference to help cut down on the cost per rooms. Look at the money we gained, both GA and Gam-Anon from the last two conferences. Let's cut the cost not only for the Trustees but also for the fellowship.

Joe B. - Area 6C

If we can't admit our mistakes, then we are bound to repeat them

6/16/08 - 7:50 PM

Fellow Trustees, current, past and especially the new ones,

Friday, June 20th will be an important day in the recent history of this fellowship. It will

be the opening of bids by the Board of Regents for the new contract renewal of the North American hotline. Many of you know that I have been trying to highlight to the rest of the Trustees that even though the operational side of the hotline works well, the business end of the system is a classic example of a contract gone wild. This includes costs to ISO that will end up at \$38,400 in total when the current contract ends on 12/31 of this year, in addition to a host of items that were not attended to at the time of signing the contract.

Can anything be changed with the current contract? No, and that is not the foundation for my concern. What is important is the new contracts that will first be revealed on the 20th. I have been in a struggle with the Board of Regents, the hotline committee and its various members for well over a year to get more information revealed about the monthly details of what is happening with the system. Information that would clearly show how our Fellowship got fleeced with the current contract. What I have gotten back in answers brings new meaning to the term Philadelphia Lawyer, no offense to my brothers and sisters from Area 13.

Paramount to this entire issue is that the Board of Regents doesn't have to answer questions if they choose not to. The safety net in all this is for the BOR to say that it will act on the advise of the Board of Trustees. Essentially, that is a statement to tell me or anyone else who raises issues that the BOR will not answer questions if they don't want to. As bold a statement as that is, the reality is that most of the Trustees know that the hotline is working just fine and therefore there are no problems with it. Period - the end.

Can I explain the problems in this submission of the Trustee Line? Of course, but because of the length and detail it would require, few if any of you would read it to the end. But I am more interested in the process. Much of what we do in GA and especially with the BOR and the BOT is about the process. In the case of this hotline, the process has been shot full of holes, because of members of the BOR who were (speaking about the previous BOR) and currently are (speaking about the current BOR) ignorance regarding the telecom markets, a lack of due diligence with the contract and probably the most upsetting is the lack of anyone on the BOR or the hotline committee to acknowledge the errors with the current contract, so that we don't repeat them again. In this last area, you can call me a complete skeptic because there has been absolutely no transparency in the process of soliciting a bid. I can't imagine what a circus it will be between the time the bids are opened and the awarding of the bid. I know that as of right now, the BOT is going to discuss this situation in Houston and then the BOR is going to make a decision.

What should concern all of the Trustees is the process is that provisions of the new contract bid proposals will most probably not be disclosed for all the Trustees to review until Houston. I don't have any idea how the Trustees can give this issue enough time to understand what the impact will be on the Fellowship, both legally and operationally. From all that has been said thus far by the committee through the monthly BOR minutes, which has been nothing more than an eye-dropper in quantity, the BOR will 'allow' this to be discussed in Houston, but it will just be window dressing to say that the BOT has its opportunity to comment on the bids, and the BOR will do what it wants in the end. Article VII, Section 2 of the By-Laws will be followed to the letter of the law.

Where we as Trustees need to act is from the Guidance Code, Article XIII, Section 5, which states that 'The sole purpose of the Board of Regents is to supervise the operations of the International Service Office (I.S.O.) and see that it is operated effectively and efficiently.' We cannot once again be swept into another contract with an entity (the BOR) that was entrusted to do a job and did so with many errors and ill-conceived ideas. The BOT needs to be in the decision loop for a legal and financial commitment of this size.

It has been told to me by the involved parties of the BOR and hotline committee that the BOR was only acting on what the BOT had already approved, and part of that approval was the \$1,600 per month commitment that is being paid to Erlang Communications. That is an outright misrepresentation. No, let me change that to something more direct...that is an outright lie. The original motion to approve the hotline as submitted was made in New Orleans in the Fall of '04. It was tabled until Farmington in the Spring of '05 where it was passed. Review the minutes and you will see that the BOT did not vote on any amounts of money. That was up to the BOR, which they did in the October '06 meeting with a vote of 4 to 1 (credit given to Arnie B. for the NO vote) 3 members were absent and the Chair did not vote. You would think that a vote as important as this one would wait until all 9 members were present, but that's an entirely different subject.

We as Trustees have the responsibility of guiding this fellowship, as per Article VII, Section 1 of the Guidance Code. We also '...act for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, except in matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or the International Executive Secretary.' as per Section 7 of the same Article. I know that the BOR has previously approved all contracts, but has the BOT ever stood up and said that it wants to be involved with specific ones? I would assume that not to be the case.

Something else that is also adding to this entire mess is Article XIII, Section 9, stating 'Expenditures by the Board of Regents should be limited to \$2,500.00, except for approved Gamblers Anonymous literature. All expenditures other than these, if the Board of Trustees objects by a majority vote, no money should be spent for that particular item. Board of Trustees time to notify the Board of Regents is sixty (60) days.' Has this ever been exercised by the BOT? What mechanism exists for implementing this provision? How does this become an issue for the BOT to deal with? Think about this issue and how that would have worked with the \$19,200 annual commitment for the hotline? The BOR vote to approve the hotline contract with a \$40,000 cap came after the September '06

conference in Fort Lauderdale. How would we have been able to use this part of the Guidance Code in time to stop the signing of the contract? The obvious answer is that we would not have been able to do so.

I'm not trying to blow the hotline up, but I am trying to look after the money we spend, when other services would not charge these inflammatory amounts of money because we didn't have qualified people in the BOR at the time that could honestly assess the merits of this contract. Maybe we need to look at using outside counsel for such commitments. We have that opportunity now. I have suggested to the committee that after the opening of the bids, that all the bids get posted on the Trustee website for observation, review and commentary by the members of the BOT. There should be a 60-day window for any questions and comments that are offered by the Trustees that must be answered by the BOR. The names of the companies could be replaced with Company A, Company B, etc. We can't expect that the 9 members of the BOR have sufficient expertise in the telecom world to make a truly informed decision, yet we no doubt have some people in the world of the Trustees that could render suggestions on how to improve the proposed bids in price, language, provisions, and a host of others. After the comments are answered and hopefully acted upon, then we can no doubt have a more livable contract for the next however many years.

This hotline belongs to everyone who contributes to ISO. Each one of us has a say in what is going on. The BOR is too busy telling everyone who questions it why things can't change, instead of embracing ALL ideas with the intent of making every process more transparent. Yes, we will survive the \$38,400 2-year expenditure for the hotline, thanks to very profitable Los Angeles and Chicago conferences, but why shouldn't we be looking for something that might cost 1/10th that, if it is available? There are many dozens of firms out there very easily accessible through some very simple Google searches that are more than capable of handling this hotline. I know first hand because I spoke with 4 of them and ISO would not have to bear the brunt of charges such as we have been paying for the last 18 months. The hotline committee complains that I haven't given them the name of one of the firms I contacted last year. Really guys...can't you do your own research and find 20 companies to put in bid proposals? Stop looking to squelch my voice of objections and use a little H-O-W to get the job done and save us all some money. Money is not supposed to be our problem, but that doesn't mean we should waste it the way we have with current contract when it comes time to the next term.

David M. - Area 12
New Jersey

6/17/08 - 1:13 PM
Dear Trustees;

I read with interest David's letter concerning the Hot Line. I have been in constant contact with David and the Board of Regents concerning the new contract. I have discussed the issues that are of paramount importance in the new contract.

1. We own the number and it can be moved.
2. The cost to I.S.O. should be as close to zero as possible.
3. There is an opt out clause in the contract.

All of these items I know including a few others were placed into the R.F.P. and sent to the companies to bid. I for one cannot keep discussing or listening to what happened in the past. It would be for me just like going to a meeting every night and talking about how my gambling days were. Well I am in recovery now and need to move forward. I had to learn to live a normal life and do normal things.

I applaud the Board of Regents for the work they put into the R.F.P. for this contract. I know David is passionate about this issue unfortunately the time has come to let it go and move on. When issues become detrimental because of their nature to the fellowship we must sit back and think but again about our primary purpose in this program.

The B.O.R. are charged with the day to day operation of the business of the International Service Office. They view and evaluate the contracts. As mentioned in David's letter the \$2,500 expenditure is for items that have not been covered in the budget. Such as buying a new telephone system after the approval of the budget.

Since I cannot be there Friday due to recent Surgery I have asked Ed E. to represent me at the opening of the bids. I have full faith and trust in Ed and the B.O.R. to make a good choice for a service provider. I for one don't feel that every item needs to come before the Board of Trustees for their blessing. This program belongs to Everyone not just a handful of people.

Maybe time has come where there are too many people making decisions. I sit on another Board that has 78 members this year on 15 of them will have the right to vote on issues. Those 15 people were elected by their peers and maybe this is the future we need to look at. It saves in expenses to the areas and for sure would move things along more quickly.

But it does lack an important element and that is input from others. Is that good or bad I don't know.

I just want each of you to know that I feel the B.O.R. is doing what they have been charged to do and I have faith they will do the right thing.

I will close with this. In my 24 years of recovery I have never been more affected by two people who I feel have set out to destroy each other. I pray daily that they will both follow the principles of this program and surely put principles before personalities.

I know some of you enjoy the trustee line but I also know that more of you never read it than do. Could it be because of the negativity in it. I don't know but maybe it is time we place some real guidelines on what is published in the trustee line or maybe we should evaluate if we still want to have the trustee line.

I hope you all have a great summer.

Tom M. - Area 2
Chairman, Board of Trustees

6/18/08 - 11:57 AM

The continuing back and forth, push and pull regarding the 'National Hotline' can be put to bed with the following action.

'GET OUT OF THE HOT LINE BUSINESS'

Before you dismiss this action, allow me three lines

About a year ago, in a heated NJIG discussion yours truly said and I quote 'the NJIG hotline has outlived it's uselessness'. Ask a new member how they came to GA, and if they don't answer, by car, they will usually say I or my wife called the hotline number 1-800-gambler. That sums it up. This outside entity has the PRIMO NUMBER, trained manpower to service it, deep pockets to finance, AND THEY REFER THE CALLER TO GA.

Bobby P. - past Trustee, Area 12
