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**Trustee Line for January 2015**

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 1/31/15.

**Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past**

The subjects listed below are 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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**Money Is Not Our Problem - Or Is It?**

1/1/15 - 12:01 AM

Hello trustees, our intergroup (LA) has been faced with an issue that I would like some feedback from other areas and intergroups. Our treasury at intergroup is at \$9,000 and quickly approaching \$10,000 and is getting some members nervous. I am aware that this might not pertain to all intergroups, however, if you have reached a high limit in your accounts...please let me know how you have handled it and what would you suggest based on your experiences.

Thanks, Ara H. - Area I Trustee, Los Angeles

1/4/15 - 6:11 AM

This is a great topic Ara, and it needs to be periodically brought up. If you look at the GA Treasury Guideline approved by the BOT, it states that a group should keep three months expenses as a prudent reserve. Although written for GA groups, the same would apply to Intergroup. Being more of a business group, some would say that Intergroup should keep six months expenses as a reserve.

Our area does not have a written policy and we are approaching almost 12 months reserve and I was trying to figure out how to address this issue. My plan is to get copies of the GA Treasury Guidelines and formally vote on the level of reserve we want at Intergroup and incorporate the results of the vote into our bylaws. My hope is that we will vote to send the excess to ISO.

Some areas who have switched over to the new hotline are saving \$200- \$300 per month; it won't take too long to build up a large reserve. As groups see too large a reserve at Intergroup, their donations will decrease (look at the recent example of a large donation to ISO). And as compulsive gamblers, the larger the balance, the more it "talks" to our illness – it becomes a target for misuse.

Some areas are reluctant to increase donations to Intergroup or ISO. I don't understand this reluctance. I am pretty sure that if ISO consistently had a balance above their prudent reserve, they would take action to reduce the balance by lowering the cost of our literature. In the end, the whole fellowship benefits. I get upset when I hear a group I attend say they should have a party to get rid of the excess funds; that was not my reason for putting my money in the basket. Buy some literature and distribute it in your community, buy an ad in the local paper, but don't buy pizza with my donation – it won't help me with my New Year's resolution.

Paul S. - Area 17 Current Trustee, Connecticut

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1/13/15 - 10:39 PM

Hi Ara,

I think that there should be a limit to how much money any intergroup keeps and all excess to that should be give to ISO. The amount should be whatever you need to operate your intergroup and each group should have enough to cover what your intergroup covers each year with a reserve of three months expenses if possible. I believe that every group should have a reserve, but I know that is taking a chances but the Treasurer should have 2 years or more, with exceptions

I don't think that your group should have no party with the money. You should continue what you have always done each year and give the rest to ISO. This is how I see it most people don't even know how much or how important ISO is to GA. Most people believe that the intergroups are the most important part of GA. People need to understand that without ISO, there would be no international GA and we would not know what any of the other intergroups are doing. No one would know anything about anywhere else. All information from all groups should go to ISO

ISO is the meat and potatoes of this program and we are the vegetables put it all together and you have a dinner. You can eat just the vegetables but you do not have a balance meal without the meat and potatoes.

People need to be educated on what ISO is and The Board of Regents. This week in San Diego at one of our meeting s, they are going to have a speaker talk about the ISO and Board of Regent. I will be there to see what they have to say.

The problem is no one wants to listen when you talk business or Guidelines for the rooms, it is sad but that is what I found out to be true in the San Diego area. Every group should have guidelines, which goes over everything. Guidelines should be in writing. That tells a new secretary how thing are done in this meeting. Without them people can do what every they want.

The way I see it is ISO is the glue that hold us together and without ISO we could not made it alone. People need to try to give all we can afford to ISO. Be a life liner. If not, have your group vote to give 40% to ISO and 60% to your intergroup. That would help ISO out a lot and you are giving something every month as a group. Remember it is excess to the amount you need to run your meeting. Just think about educating people about ISO and maybe you can get groups to give a larger percentage then they are giving today.

Last but not least, Yes money is going to be if not already a problem for ISO. They have less people signing up for life liners. Some people who were signed up are passing away. I think that it is time to take this back to the rooms and see if we can get each room to give a percentage to ISO and intergroup. Maybe once a year if your intergroup have a reserve amount set up, intergroup can turnover their excess to ISO. That's just what I think.

I don't know how much your meetings are giving to ISO if anything, but I think in San Diego we can do better. If they know what it is for.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

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**Trustees Voting Themselves A Vacation In Cancun, Mexico**

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1/1/15 - 12:01 AM

Not the first time I have heard this statement. It throughly disgusts me. The part of the fellowship not just this New Jersey part but anywhere surely need to get the facts as David says. And may I preface that by saying David and I do not always see things the same way. For the most part I like to hear what the fellowship has to say until things like this happen.

FACT: From a Trustee that is in the know on this subject.

You would have to search far and wide to find an area in Gamblers Anonymous that has worked as hard as the country of Mexico and its members. I won't single out any one because there are several really dedicated members who have worked very hard to help their members. Now after all this hard work they have stepped up and are working on their first time at hosting an International Conference. What a shining example to show the fellowship "How it Works"...One step, one day at a time. What a clear slap in the face to make such crude comments, not really to the Trustees but to the hard working members of the Mexican fellowship who want to show their pride in this fellowship to everyone.

For those of you who choose to utter these ridiculous words I say get a CLUE in

your recovery.

Steve R. - Area 2B Trustee, Sacramento

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1/13/15 - 10:57 PM

That is funny to me because I am a new Trustee, I myself do not want to go to Mexico. It does seem like a vacation for me. Maybe because I am new but who wants to go to Mexico for a vacation. Those people are running from there as fast as they can to get across the border. I for one do not feel safe over there. Yes, it is great they are hosting a conference but I do not want to go. Who ever feels like it is a vacation should go and have a vacation but you can count me out. That's what I think about it being a vacation for the trustees. Everyone who goes, I hope they make it back. I think I will sit this Vacation out.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

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1/14/15 - 1:07 PM

Karen,

One of the functions of a Trustee is to support the wishes of the majority of the Board of Trustees. Whether you agree or not, the BOT granted Cancun Mexico the Conference for the Spring of 2015. This is a committee of GA members who spent time and effort to bid for this Conference and as a result, were successful with their bid. They are putting on this Conference and Trustee Meeting in an area of the country that many Americans and people from around the world visit on a regular basis.

The fact that you do not want to go to Mexico does not give you the right to brand Cancun as a place where people go and never get back home. You have the option of deciding for yourself, however, it is a very poor choice of words to infer that Cancun is dangerous and that not everyone will return back home.

The Trustee meeting and Conference is not a vacation for Trustees. It is our obligation to attend the meeting to do the work we agreed to do when we ran for Trustee. This conference was already approved when you became a Trustee.

If a Trustee wishes to spend more time in the area where the conference is being held, he/she does this at their own expense. I spend over one week visiting San Diego at the last two conferences your area held and nobody said I was using the Trustee Meeting as an excuse for having a vacation.

You did our brothers and sisters of Mexico a disservice with your comments and I don't think they should be treated any differently than any area in the USA or Canada who host a conference. I hope you have not influenced other Trustees from attending this Trustee Meeting and Conference.

Herb B. - 2nd Co-Chair BOT, Area 5, Montreal

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1/15/15 - 9:51 PM

Hi Herb,

I'm sorry that you feel that way and it is not my intention to influence anyone. Yes, I have right to my opinion. Whether I go or not I can still do my job as a Trustee. If people don't go to the conference, it will be their own choice. I am a new trustee. I really don't believe that I have the much influence over people. The Trustee line is for you to give your opinion it not right or wrong, it is your opinion and that was mine. If I influenced anyone, I'm Sorry but they did not want to go but afraid to say anything.

Herb, I want to say to you. I'm sorry that is how you feel but what I said was how I feel and we both have a right to are opinion.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

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1/22/15 - 3:34 PM

Karen,

As Trustee Website Admin, I am the gatekeeper of the Trustee Line. If something comes in that appears to be inappropriate, I pass it off to the Trustee Website Committee for their decision. Your initial posting was not a derogatory statement about another member, person or another room, so it met with the guidelines.

Since that posting, I have received a number of inquires, as to why it was allowed to be posted. I'm at a loss why those same people didn't bother to write anything in response. However it was the email from a past Trustee that motivated me to write this. Having said that, let me try and encapsulate the

essence of the objections of that email and numerous others.

Yes, what you wrote is your opinion, but what you wrote made it sound like anyone in Mexico is at risk for being held hostage. You referenced that the Mexicans are doing whatever they can to leave the country. The only borders they have are the USA and Guatemala at the northern and southern ends of the country. I think if you examine that statement, it is clear that you have made a blanket statement of all Mexicans. That kind of generalization is not reasonable or fair and speaks to a bigger issue that hangs a label on all Mexicans. Hopefully you can see that.

Sure, the news periodically goes through phases of printing stories of internal struggles with various gangs and/or drug lords in Mexico and the trouble they cause other people. If you consider that, which I believe is the basis for your statement, it is incorrect to characterize all Mexicans as having such a problem. There are over 122 mil people in Mexico. Mexico has 1,834 airports with untold amounts of flights each day. Such a problem, as you outline, would surely impact many people who travel in and out of Mexico. Yet we don't hear anything in the news about such a situation.

Currently, we have 5 Trustees from Mexico. To the best of my knowledge, none of them are seeking asylum in the US or any other country. Every country has its internal struggles. Crime, discrimination, prejudice and maybe worst of all, racism are but a few of the problems that risk the well-being of many in such areas. The US still wrestles with all these and more.

As Herb said, statements of such generalizations about all of Mexico could easily be construed as a real threat to every GA member who has thoughts of attending the Cancun Conference in October. One's safety can never be minimized, and concerns raised by members on this or any other platform, especially when they are opinions not based on the fact, could negatively impact many situations in our Fellowship. In this case, we are talking about the Cancun Conference. It essentially could put the conference at financial risk of success. Also, it is important to know that Cancun is nowhere near any of the areas that might have been periodically cited in the news. Also, there are no travel advisories that have been listed by the US Department of State.

I think your concern for people making it back to their homes after the conference should be more about the Trustees being tired from working through a large agenda of items that will hopefully help and benefit all members of this Fellowship. Their risk about being in Cancun will be from being overtired as a result of doing their jobs.

Again, the purpose of me writing this was to summarize the generalizations that were part of your posting and explain how many took what you wrote. Yes, you wrote your opinion and that is great. I hope what I have written here, is taken by you as an explanation and not a reason for you to stop posting items to the Trustee Line.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

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1/22/15 - 8:29 PM

I am a former Trustee. I have been following this thread. I just wanted to add that my sister attended a conference in Cancun in October where there were 3,000 attendees from all over the world. There were no incidents of any kind. Thanks to all of the Trustees for their hard work on behalf of GA.

Mary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

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<b>Put on Your Thinking Caps</b>
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1/4/15 - 6:40 AM

I have put a discussion item on the Cherry Hill Agenda to discuss new member attraction and retention because I see our area struggle with getting new members to stay and less new members showing up at our meetings. But there is no need to wait until the Trustee Meeting to start the discussion.

What is your area doing and what works the best? Recently, our area made up some literature racks for local libraries to display in their reference section. Some don't have a place for our rack, but they are willing to put up the Helpline Flyer, others have added our literature to rack for self help information. My hope is that we will get information in every library in our area.

Recently, when a new member showed up at our group, his phone number was given to several group members to call him during the week and he has continued to show up. Now we just need to help him get a sponsor and start working the steps. How does your group get new members to work the steps?

How does your group retain new members? Does your group do any public information or do you rely on Intergroup? Where have you put up the Helpline Flyer in your area? Does our Public Relations literature meet your group and Intergroup needs? What has worked for your group?

Paul S. - Area 17 Current Trustee

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1/14/14 - 12:06 AM

Hi Paul,

You know that is a great question because I truly don't think there is anything you can do. It is all up to the person. No matter what you do, they have to know that they can't control it and it is unmanageable. Step one, without knowing that nothing is going to work. They are only there because they lost a lot of money and for now they can see the devastation they have done. If they do not understand that this is a lifetime program, they go back out because they are now cured. Why do so many people go back out after a year that's another thing, we in San Diego see a lot also? I think that we have just keep doing what we are doing but somehow get the message across that this is a lifetime program maybe people won't think that they graduated. Yes, it is one day at a time but for a lifetime.

We have tried everything calling people taking them to meeting it doesn't matter if the Gambler has not surrendered to the powerlessness they have over stopping gambling. It will never work.

That is just what I think.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

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### **A Different Look At Conference Booklets**

1/4/15 - 10:22 AM

One of the big inconsistencies with our Fellowship is the outgrowth of mini-conference and international conference booklets. This is brought about because of our policy of only Gamblers Anonymous approved and appropriate literature being used, displayed, or distributed in our GA rooms - a provision carved out directly from the Guidance Code. Conference booklets are NOT GA approved literature.

As many, if not all of you know, conference booklets are collections of individual writings of GA and Gam-Anon members. Additionally, there may be other additions to the booklet that come from other sources, both known and unknown. These writings are meant to inspire the conference attendees. Whether they actually accomplish this, is up for debate.

If someone wants to have something approved as GA literature, it is a year-long process. The item must pass a merit vote, and 2 successive literature votes. The Board of Trustees really scrutinizes each such piece before it gets approval. Only then can it be brought into the GA rooms.

Conference booklets always manage to find their way into the GA rooms. What is sad is that there is no clear understanding by our membership, at every level of abstinence, that these books are not GA approved.

I have a fundamental problem with these conference booklets, because the reasoning for why they are okay to produce, is that the conferences are not GA meetings. Talk about making an argument convenient to the situation.

There is no question that we more deeply affect our members by these conferences and these booklets, because people believe they are the essence of recovery, that they are what the program is about. What they are, is a source for individuals to post their feelings on various subjects, which may or may not be part of what would be allowed in the GA room. Just because an area holds a conference, does not give that area an exemption from what we should allow our members to use.

The conferences should be considered GA meetings and be guided by the Guidance Code and all decisions of the Board of Trustees. Currently, it's like the wild west, where everyone's efforts to compose these conference booklets, almost completely ignore all that we have put into place through group conscience by the Board of Trustees.

I know this is an issue that won't get broad-based support, because areas and intergroups don't generally like change, but at the very least, we should be taking a first step by requiring a simple statement to be printed on the cover of every conference booklet.

"This booklet is NOT Gamblers Anonymous approved or appropriate literature. It cannot be used, displayed or distributed in any Gamblers Anonymous room."

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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1/14/15 - 12:06 AM

Hi David,

I agreed with you about the disclaimer: but I think it should say this booklet and other material given out at the conference is not GA approved and should not be redistributed in GA rooms.

I think that if you want to share something about it that should be okay. Because each room is self-governing and it doesn't affect GA as a whole only that meeting that they are sharing in. What people share is their own opinion and not necessary the opinion of GA as a whole.

There would be no way that it could be GA approved unless you started three to four years in advance. How crazy is that? Therefore, I think that the disclaimer should cover GA as a whole.

I know what you mean, but it isn't a meeting it is a conference. I think that there is no way to have everything GA approved because even at the conference the workshops, I am sure that everything use is not GA approved. Maybe we should say that not all materials use in the conference is GA approved.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

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new version