

Life-Line Bulletin

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Trustee Line for January 2017

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 1/31/17.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

Disclaimer - The Trustee Line is a function of the Board of Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous. It is intended solely as a forum for members of the Board of Trustees to share opinions on issues related to Gamblers Anonymous. Any postings in this or any other edition of the Trustee Line are not to be construed as the opinion of Gamblers Anonymous, as a whole. The publication of any items on the Trustee Line do not constitute an endorsement or statement of approval or acknowledgement by Gamblers Anonymous of what the contents are.

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

Subjects that receive submissions from at least 13 different people, will trigger an email blast to all the current and past Trustees, signifying a 'Hot Topic Alert' on the Trustee Line.

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Dual Responsibility To Executive Board

1/10/17 - 2:24 AM

I call it dual responsibility, there may be a better term for it. What do you know and do you care ?

We elect members of the Executive Board, whether we like it or not, their very position carries with it, at the very least, a perceived power, none more so than the positions of Chairs of BOT, BOR and The International Executive Secretary.

We trust them not to abuse or even be seen to abuse that perceived power, although it is or should be just perceived. There are doubtless times that we are grateful to those we elected when they perhaps step on the margins of acceptability in order to get or keep things moving.

The greater good may often seem to call for this skirting with the boundaries of acceptability, for example at a BOT, BOR, Intergroup or other meeting where time constraints mean we sometimes just follow our Trusted servants " Guidance " blindly and end up perhaps following like Lemmings, only to find that while we are many " Following like Lemmings " there will then be very few to pick up the pieces and, having allowed influential Trusted servant/s worsen, cause or create the problem, the barriers to change and fix are then insurmountable, almost.

But is it enough, given that we are all just imperfect human beings, to stand back, let this perceived power sometimes run riot and then criticize ?

Or should we stand up and, having elected our Trusted servants, accept the Dual responsibility of ensuring, to the best of our ability, that this " Perceived Power " does not escape and run riot.

How do we best achieve that ? How do we fairly and effectively consider the guidance and experience of those we elect without just sometimes following

blindly, or, just as bad, allowing those we elect to actually believe they possess power ?

I know there are many checks and balances and safeguards in place, but do we have a clear understanding of why they are in place and are we conscious of the absolute necessity to be vigilant constantly ?

Do we have a clear position on where we are as a fellowship so that we can assist our trusted servants in their often difficult duties without giving them Carte Blanche to run riot if the (understandable but unacceptable) bout of Ego overwhelms them occasionally ?

What's your view of " Dual responsibility " I'm looking for a big input here from all, a great opportunity for old timers and past trustees who may feel like their voice of experience is not heard, as well as current trustees and, of course, Past and present Executive board members.

Happy new year,
Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland S / E

Gamblers Anonymous in Oklahoma

1/10/17 - 1:49 PM

To Current Trustees and Former Trustees:

I have thought about all that has been said over the past five years - here and around - and specifically with gratitude about the 1/7/17 telephone conference call that David M and Richie S took the time to deal with the issues that are besetting us here. There are no easy answers and perhaps never will be.

As I lived through this past year's election cycle, a familiar phrase surfaced (although it has probably been in effect for some time) which today said volumes to me about a comparison with Gamblers Anonymous: FLY-OVER STATES. Far be it from me to tell you what to do, but I suggest perhaps we should all take a look at GA from another point of view. Since I was first elected Trustee, GA conferences have basically been on the East Coast and West Coast: LA, San Diego, Orange County, San Francisco, Phoenix, Vancouver, Montreal, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Boston, - and a very few - one I recall in Chicago, and one I recall in Kansas City; 2 in Houston. Before I became a Trustee, I attended one in New Orleans. When they offered again, they were defeated by Cabo. (West Coast) I've attended 3 mini-conferences in Kansas City; 1 in St. Louis and 1 in Minneapolis. Most do not have the financial backing to hold international conferences.

When another GA member and I began working for the hotline committee, one of the requests made of us was to contact all other hotlines in every state to make certain they were being answered satisfactorily. We compared notes, of course, and found that few were answered by humans, many were recordings, but most disturbing was the fact that they 'did what they wanted because there was no one around to check on them.' One group only held meetings when they could find a 'free' place to rent; one disregarded the Guidance Code as the membership didn't want restrictions - but they had been very successful at stopping gambling. And they said nothing to you or the BOT - they kept silent. Many are current trustees whom I know personally. I, too, kept silent for a long time and finally chose to quit GA until one of my sponsors scolded me to go back for my own sake. One member has become fully involved and committed, but I can see disappointment growing. Neither of us cares for the names we have been called, or the allegations made against us for supporting an intergroup and unity - but he is stronger than I. It gets tiresome - no matter how hard we try or believe in the Fellowship. We have been told to fix ourselves, not fix GA.

You heard (from a member, and others during the call) that self-exclusion forms were rampant, no matter how hard we tried to discourage them and advise GA did not condone these. But the point it brings up is that National Council on Problem Gambling local state offices are everywhere and they are very, very active. They are now actively involved in getting their members - clinicians - into and starting GA meetings - gee, I wonder why. I know they are paid, but we are up against them at every turn. It's an uphill battle, and one that the fly-over states have to deal with daily. And the poor newcomer doesn't get the correct information and is often sent to an unhealthy meeting. Members find a list of NCPG meetings on their website which no longer exist - not our GA website. They read on their cell phones from NCPG's supply of our literature which may

not have been updated. Frustrating is a very mild word to use when attempting to correct this perception - after all, they come to our meetings, and are believed because that is all the support there is. I was the first 'outsider' to attend a GA meeting in Tulsa for ten years. They have been given either the wrong information or no information for ten years. That's why I tried so hard to get 2 Trustees into Oklahoma - so they would get the correct information.

I was often told not to bring up a problem without having a solution - but I have no clue where to go from here. To wipe out every GA meeting not following the guidelines will deplete whatever little hope remains for the compulsive gambler who still suffers. I don't have the answers - does anyone?

Linda S. - Member, Area 7C, Oklahoma
Former Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

1/11/17 - 3:04 PM

This thread could easily be entitled "Gamblers Anonymous in...EVERYWHERE" since this is definitely not a phenomenon in your so-called "flyover" states. This is a problem EVERYWHERE that Gamblers Anonymous holds meetings! Even in such an "enlightened" (tongue in cheek) region as Southern California, we are fighting constant battles to make sure each meeting adheres to both the Guidance Code and the Group Handbook. And if people are willing to step back and take the 50,000 foot view, it's pretty easy to see why these battles continue to be fought.

GA is an organization that is extremely literature- and procedure-rich. What it is NOT is enforcement-rich, either by design or out of fear. What mechanisms are in place to deal with rogue meetings at either the national or local levels? I had this very discussion with a well-respected member of my own intergroup at a recent meeting and we were in complete agreement that good intentions mean very little if they are not accompanied by at least a little "muscle". For example, I would characterize our intergroup's rules and procedures (R&P) as being quite robust but NOWHERE in the R&P is there anything that formally addresses how to deal with a meeting that refuses to follow either the Guidance Code or Group Handbook. Of course, as a Trustee I can get up on my bully pulpit and give the meeting my thoughts but what if they tell me and the rest of the intergroup to pound sand? Is there a mechanism for me to go farther? I suppose I could escalate it to the Trustee or Regents level. Then what? They issue a "cease and desist" order? What if the rogue group doesn't cease and desist? Our Guidance Code only talks about how a meeting is "formed". It is silent on how a meeting is to be "de-formed". And if it is a well-established meeting with long-time members, do you honestly think anyone with authority is going to shut their doors?

So Linda, in answer to your question, perhaps we DO need to wipe out every meeting not following the guidelines, or at least wipe out a symbolic enough number of them to begin to level out that slippery slope we have allowed ourselves to get into. Or, in the alternative, simply let the fellowship die the natural death it is trying so hard to do.

Jack R. - Trustee, Area 1A, Orange County, California
