

# Trustee Line – Current Issue

March 2019

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## Thoughts From The Trustees – Current and Past

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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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### Elections Matter

3/2/19 – 9:45 AM

There are a lot of 'connect the dots' scenarios that are coming together for Louisville. Scenarios that will take a concerted effort on the part of the Trustees to discern if we are going to employ personalities or principles, facts from fiction, implied from actual, and right from wrong. The agenda is growing as we approach 4 weeks until it officially closes on 3/30. It appears as though many of the decisions will require all of us to dig deeply and make decisions on the future of this Fellowship.

My overview of Orlando was typical for a first Trustee meeting for the new 2-year term. Although there were many first time Trustees who got up to the microphone to speak their minds, it was the voting that showed some of the indecision that new Trustees struggle with, as they are often shocked by the structure, order and procedures that surface during the deliberation to arrive at a just opinion on each item. This is called 'Late-hand voting'. A lot of the newer Trustees wait just a few seconds longer on a vote, to be on what may seem like the winning side of a decision.

I'm not trying to malign those who do that, but actually to reinforce that the discussions before the votes can be torturous to each Trustee, as opinions can change from each speaker during the discussions. It seems to back up a decision from Browns 1979 Trustee meeting that 'No individual member, group or Intergroup can instruct a National Trustee on how to vote on any issue.' Trustees are elected by the areas to hopefully fulfill its defined function under Article VIII, Section 7, 'The Board of Trustees primary function shall be to insure the most effective exchange of thoughts and ideas between all Gamblers Anonymous groups and to act for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, except in matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or International Executive Secretary.'

A complete disservice to all our respective areas, is to blindly follow what areas 'instruct' their Trustees on how to vote, without the caveat of, 'unless information presented at the Trustee meeting makes you think differently.' Absentee ballots are part of this mess, because they do not take into consideration any of the discussions that very well could completely change the course of the voting. So yes, it is important to know how our prospective Trustees think about things, before they are elected. An area doesn't get the benefit of the discussions, so they have to rely on the Trustees to make the right decisions for each item.

The same situation will happen with the elections we face for the Board of Regents and the Executive Board of the Board of Trustees. I personally find the BOR elections to be a farce, as few people know who the people are other than a short-written biography of what positions they have held in their area. That doesn't speak to character and people with the ability to run a corporation, which is what the BOR does. They don't get to show any of that, with the exception of the monthly BOR conference call, which is very poorly attending by non-BOR members. Yet the BOT is responsible for voting for the BOR. Talk about a process that is really broken.

The BOT Executive Board is different, but not much better. We ask the Trustees to make a very important set of decisions on who we elect to the Executive Board after just 1.5 meets. Who can make a proper decision from such limited data? The voting will generally favor the existing members of the Executive Board, because that's who we have seen make meeting decisions. It's a very unfair position in which to put the new Trustees. Now think about this. What do we do with new people who want to run for the Executive Board? People who have never taken a position on the Executive Board are unproven in their ability to serve us properly on that board. Are we to make decisions on how those candidates present themselves during a short speech before the election, especially if these people have not been active on the floor? Unfortunately, if they are nominated and accept, that's exactly what we have to do.

I believe that such new potential candidates deserve a shot, but as second Co-Chair, not first and definitely not the Chair itself. The office of the Chair is an enormous responsibility and obligation to the Board of Trustees. If the Chair can't do his/her duties, then the first Co-Chair has to step in,

which is no place for a newbie on the Executive Board. Over my time on the BOT, I have witnessed people who could do the job as Chair, but their actions changed the course of many things on the BOT that impacted the Fellowship in ways that were, shall I say, not received well. I'm asking that the Trustees not be so quick to settle for anyone who will sit on the Executive Board for this election. The Trustees elect the Executive Board and that gives us a huge responsibility to those we serve.

By the way, I have an agenda item on to deal with this short time for voting after the new Trustee terms begin. It gives all the Trustees and additional 2 meetings to put under their belt to really witness the capabilities of any and all candidates who would want to be on the Executive Board. This is actually a step for us to make better decisions, in at least this one area.

**David M. – Area 12, New Jersey**

**3/7/19 – 8:13 PM**

David I understand your concerns regarding elections for the BOR and BOT. When I first was asked to vote for the BOR I can remember how I didn't know any of the people on the ballot and neither did members in my area. I had to take a leap of faith and vote with what was in their biography. Did I vote for the best person? Who knows. But I did the best I could. Did any one I voted for hurt the program? Hopefully they didn't. We all as trustees start out as newbies and learn along the way. We have to listen carefully and stay as informed as we can. The newbies now are no different than we were in the beginning. They'll learn and do the best they can as we did.

The same is true for the BOT officers. I don't agree with you regarding your agenda item that new trustees wait to vote. Both of these elections are very important to the program and I don't want to make light of this. Is our election process the best? Maybe not. It's worked for many years and new people are still coming to meetings. That's the most important part of the program. I have to remind myself that I have no control over certain things in my life but what I must always remember is, have I done the best I could to listen to both sides, will my decision really hurt the program, am I putting principles before personality and am I thinking only about me and not the bigger picture?

So for all the newbies, think for yourself, listen and dive in. Your voice is important.

**Jo K. – Area 8D, Missouri**