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Trustee Line for August 2015

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 8/31/15.

Questions and Answers Involving Individual BOT Committees

Any GA member can contact the Chairs of the Committees listed below with any questions or concerns they might have. The Chairs will answer the emails and the resulting issues will be posted under each committee involved in the email. This will serve as help for other members, Intergroups or areas, who may be going through the same situations. The emails will not breach anonymity and will be redacted to make sure names and areas are not included in this section. You are also invited to click the individual committee links on the left margin, for more information.

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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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Rush To Judgement

8/6/15 - 12:23 AM

In 2009, the Board of Trustees passed the Abuse and Harassment pamphlet. Many feel this was one of the most progressive publications we had passed in a very long time. For the first time, every member, room and area finally had a uniform procedure on how to handle issues of abuse and harassment. The idea was to allow a process to eliminate the objectionable behavior by members and

protect the sanctity of the rooms and the right of each GA member to feel safe in this program.

As we all put in more years in this program, it is almost a given that we will run across someone, or even many people, who are hell-bent on turning a room upside down with behavior that is completely unacceptable. This can extend to issues outside the room, which could involve legal remedies. Members may act in a predatory manner with other members, or any number of offensive and unacceptable situations. Whatever the behaviors are, they can easily create a hostile environment for other members, whether or not they are the targets of such events.

One of the core concepts of GA is to create a safe area for members who wish to share their experience, strength and hope with each other in order to solve our common problem and help others recover from a gambling problem. When members create these uncomfortable situations in the rooms or outside, and the situations go unchecked, the simple reality is that we lose members, as they don't need to put themselves at emotional or physical risk. Possibly worse than that, they don't feel safe.

For many decades, the long-timers in the program took it upon themselves to 'straighten these members out'. Actions were taken that were what they thought was best for the room, but not best for the Fellowship at large.

An issue came up in my area last month, that highlights the fact that even though we have this Abuse and Harassment booklet, few members are aware of it, few rooms refer to it and those who try to make use of it, don't follow what is written in it.

About 3-4 months ago, I was made aware of these problems by a phone call from a member of one of the rooms that this person attends, and went to the room in question to try to assist the room with how to resolve and work through what sounded like abuse and harassment. The member didn't show up the next week, so things I was not contacted, until a few weeks ago. This same member contacted the ISO, sent a message to the Trustee Website Admin and letters to our Intergroup, all seeking help for what he said was discrimination, harassment, defamation and slander.

Let me say that the version from that member, regarding what happened, was clearly different from the members' version of the room. What ensued was a series of moves that were done in complete absence of knowing any of the procedures of the Abuse and Harassment process. What had happened was that the member was told by a senior member of a room that he could not come back to the room, and was going to be told the same if he attempted to come to any other room that the senior member attended. Another senior member from a different room, was prepared to adopt the same policy.

What's wrong here is that the procedures for this solution were a replay of how things got done many decades ago. The Abuse and Harassment pamphlet is based on an escalation process. It starts with 1) member-to-member, 2) sponsor, 3) trusted servants, and 4) local Intergroup and Trustees. With each step of the way, the process allows for the offending member to be given the opportunity to resolve the problem. When ALL of this fails, the group can take a vote to remove the member from that room. This does not mean permanently banning the person from the room. The member always has the right to return to the room providing the issue has been reconciled between all parties and the offending behavior is no longer an issue.

Even after lengthy discussions with the Trustees in my area, these procedures were not followed. This matter was deemed resolved, when it is actually anything but that. Everyone who is placed in a situation like this MUST follow the outlined procedures. Thinking that an abbreviated version is fine, is taking matters into one's own hands. To use a baseball metaphor, the days of fighting with the umpire and getting thrown out of the game, are over, as it relates to abuse and harassment. We all run on a very delicate line of trying to maintain safety in the room for all members, while dealing with members who would do violence to the concept of group unity.

Based on this incident in my area, and how poorly it was handled, it gives new meaning to closer look at the Responsibilities for International Trustees, items 5 and 11. Not following those items does affect GA as a whole. Clearly, we should all be completely clear about the ENTIRE Abuse and Harassment pamphlet and all its contents, in addition to making best efforts to make sure it is distributed to all rooms. The Trustees should do periodic reviews with the trusted servants of the rooms in their area, to make sure everyone is aware of proper procedures. This starts with all the current Trustees becoming completely familiar with each of the 8 pages in the pamphlet, because saying you're familiar with it, obviously doesn't make it so.

8/10/15 - 9:56 AM

At our July Intergroup meeting, it was brought to our attention during "room talk" there was a question on what to do about an harassment situation. The room clearly either had not received or had not read the GA pamphlet about Abuse and Harassment. We gave the individual a copy of the pamphlet and gave guidance consistent with the GA recommended approach.

Four days later, I received a call from a female member who reported another incident of harassment, and asked what to do. After providing counseling, I realized this was an issue for all rooms in our Area. I then went out to meetings to advise on the GA recommended action.

These are not isolated incidences. Recently, I was told of a television program examining predatory behavior in another 12-step program. I believe all trusted servants should be extremely sensitive to the possibility of this type of behavior, and perhaps add a cautionary note at the beginning of meetings.

Jim G. - Area 6, Southern Florida

8/10/15 - 5:38 PM

Fellow Current and Former Trustees:

While I agree that the current Abuse and Harassment pamphlet is comprehensive and well written, I am not convinced the guidance is applied equally and can be misunderstood by some groups and/or rooms. Would it not be in the best of interests of all to hold workshops and discussion groups to determine the best course of action? I speak of 'pro-action' rather than 'reactive' decisions. Would it not be advisable to hold advisories prior to the 'heat of battle' rather than wait until something very unfortunate happens to one person or another?

Some groups I've attended mention this briefly in their opening statements: 'we all have a right to feel safe in and outside our rooms.' This brief statement does not dwell on the negative, but gives everyone in the room an advance notice of what behavior is expected at a GA meeting. However, the statement indicating the 'partial listing' on page 3 leaves the door open for one member or group of members to attack another member for personal reasons for what is "perceived to be" abuse or harassment. The 'offender' is then perceived to be guilty; and this cannot or should not be allowed to occur as the stigma remains for a very long period of time and diminishes what could potentially be a real threat to the room or group.

Not all GA members live in urban centers; some live in rural centers and may not be as sophisticated nor may they have the same concept of 'abuse' as do others.

With respect for all,
Linda S. - Area 7C, Oklahoma
Former Trustee Area 3A - San Diego

Unity Step 7

8/6/15 - 10:29 AM

Hello to the active Trustees. Please be aware that the basic tenets of our Gamblers Anonymous program is threatened by the possibility of passage allowing contributions by others to celebrate or memorialize a members passing. The observation that the contributions will be "small money"; only \$50.00 - \$100.00 has no bearing on the breaking of a fundamental principal.

Anyone but a member is an outsider and we need to embrace a proper procedure to accept funds from the deceased by using common sense. Thus, a brief letter executed by an attorney for the Estate, the Executor or a family member stating that the deceased has instructed the contribution prior to their demise would be sufficient to have Gamblers Anonymous accept funds.

Our underlying issue of increasing income should not trample upon the independence of members living and supporting our unity, especially as defined in #7. The statement that the International Service Office is not a "Group" is incorrect as it is the "business" part of Gamblers Anonymous which is "owned" and operated by its members. The International Service Office can be also defined as "Group Headquarters".

Let's not change what has been in effect for over 58 years.

8/7/15 - 12:20 AM

In looking over the minutes from the June Board of Regents meeting, it shows the discussion of items from Cherry Hill that directly affect the Board of Regents. The minutes show this about the item:
Item #48 - By-Laws Change – “to accept donations from family and friends of G.A. members in memory of members that have passed away” passed a 1st vote.

I can't say I'm surprised that there was no discussion, because the BOR got the vote the way they wanted on an item of their own creation. Evidently, there was no discussion about the backlash from this item, regarding its complete contradiction to Unity Step 7. It was my expectation that a discussion during the June meeting would have ensued regarding this and that maybe the Board of Regents would have agreed that it might not have been the best conceived idea and that the Board of Regents might change their opinion about this item's passage in Cancun. The minutes don't reflect this. If that is not the case, then don't read what follows. But I think we all realize, the BOR is pleased with the vote outcome.

So now, the Board of Trustees will be forced to face a potential violation of the Unity Steps, just to appease those people who feel we should accept money from non-GA people who wish to contribute in memory of someone's passing in the program.

Before I speak about the obvious point about the Board of Trustees making best efforts to defeat this item on its 2nd vote in Cancun, I want to ask the question of what justification those Trustees had for voting in favor of this item. This is a long posting, so if you are one of those people, why not let us know why you voted yes to item 48.

It is hard for me to even conceive that the pleading by some in Cherry Hill, regarding this item, about how important it was for them to be comforted knowing that their friends could remember them with a contribution. I am to total disbelief that such a premise would even be worthy of any credibility. This stance was cited by a BOR member in Cherry Hill.

Another position was that it was embarrassing to have to send a check back to the people who sent in a contribution in memory of a deceased member, because they were themselves not GA members. This statement was also cited by a BOR member.

But the really amazing position was the usual superficial justification of why the individual Unity Steps don't apply to a situation, because the members only read the Steps and not the simple explanations of each Unity Step in the Red Book. In this case, it was to use Unity Step 7 as a tool to justify actions to allow contributions to ISO with a change in the By-Laws. Here is a reminder of what happened in the presentation of this agenda item in Cherry Hill, which was also a premise for approval and cited by yet another BOR member.

Unity Step 7
EVERY GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS GROUP OUGHT TO BE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING, DECLINING OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS.

The author of the item said that the ISO is not a group, so Unity Step 7 does not apply to the ISO, therefore it is appropriate to take contributions from non-GA members in memory of those who have passed.

When I heard that, I thought I was listening to a compulsive gambler actively in the gambling addiction. The statement is one of total convenience and framed to make it work for the gambler and the desired outcome. However, the premise is flawed, because if Unity Step 7 doesn't apply to the ISO, then why wouldn't it apply to ANYONE who wishes to send money at any time for any reason? The statement is a black and white issue, but the Board of Regents collectively now wants to make a decision on their own, through the ISO, that we can pick and choose when it is okay to take money from not GA members? Where does this end? The next situation to allow money will use item 48 as the basis for passing another 'condition' that is okay to violate Unity Step 7 even further.

The supporting statements, again made by Board of Regents members, were made that these checks are not big amounts. Really? That's justification enough to take money from non-GA members? How much is too much? Who makes those decisions? If the ISO has a cash shortfall in any one month, we will extend the limit of that amount?

The reality is that the initial statement about Unity Step 7 is false, because it DOES apply to the ISO. Here is the explanation located in the Red Book: “In order to maintain the independence of the Fellowship as a whole as well as

individual groups, Gamblers Anonymous does not accept outside contributions. This policy is sustained in order that no undue control can be exercised over Gamblers Anonymous, from without or within. By allowing outside contributions both groups and members would be deprived of exercising responsibility over their affairs and their obligation to the Fellowship. If anyone were to be permitted to contribute to Gamblers Anonymous other than its members, that person might expect the right to voice an opinion as to the manner that we choose to run our Fellowship.”

Invariably, we have to listen to the 'long-timers' in GA tell us what the original intention was for any Step, regarding groups and rooms with this Step. Regardless of such undocumented opinions, it is crystal clear with the 2 sentences of this explanation... ”In order to maintain the independence of the Fellowship as a whole as well as individual groups, Gamblers Anonymous does not accept outside contributions.”

What we saw in Cherry Hill was an attempt to take the purity of Unity Step 7 and pervert it by trying to side step the issue with item #48, a move to change the By- Laws of the Corporation of Gamblers Anonymous with this item: “Although the Guidance Code states Groups are self supporting and do not take outside donations, the International Service Office (ISO) can accept donations from family and friends of Gamblers Anonymous Members in memory of members that have passed away.

I find it interesting that the presentation was made by the BOR Chair that Trustee Line submissions that are critical of the BOR are a distraction for the BOR. I will let that stand, for now, but it is no secret that I have been critical of the BOR for a long time. Most of that has been because of how the BOR has stiff-armed pertinent issues and how it has been handled procedurally by those who were BOR Chairs. I remember one posting in response to my criticism, which said the BOR was entrusted by the Fellowship to do a job and then a doing a wonderful job and should not be 'attacked' by people such as myself.

So...yes, we have entrusted it to do its job. I don't remember reading anywhere in either the By-Laws or the Guidance Code, that part of 'entrusting' the BOR to do its job, was trying to use the Unity Steps to figure out a way to violate the same Unity Step that has been the very essence of our Fellowship. I am disgusted with the prospects that this change in the By-Laws is one vote away from passage, and even worse, how the BOR brought this to the floor, justified it, and is still evidently standing behind it for a second vote.

Irrespective of the irresponsible decision of the BOR, by a vote of 6-1, to support item #48, I put it to all the Trustees to follow item 3 from the Responsibilities of the International Trustees:
“Uphold the Guidance Code, and all decisions made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects G.A. as a whole).”
and by inclusion, Guidance Code, Article 8, Section:
“The Board of Trustees shall act as guardians of the Twelve Steps of RECOVERY and the Twelve Step UNITY PROGRAM and must be guided by these precepts in all their decisions.”

Passing item 48 in Cherry Hill was an outright breach of our responsibilities. Cancun will be our chance to rectify a vote that should never have happened, but should have been called out of order because it violated Unity Step 7. Expect a roll call vote to be requested for this 2nd vote. It's important for everyone's area to know which Trustees voted to knowingly violate Unity Step 7.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

8/7/15 - 5:05 PM

Dear Trusted Servants,

Most times, I like to just read the different exchanging of thoughts on the Trustee Line and sometimes it is interesting, and other times it disturbs my serenity and I question my actions or which way the GA fellowship is heading, and I also question whether or not the Trustee Line is a useful tool. But, it is something that has been brought up before and the BOT body feels like it is a useful tool, so here we are. I usually don't feel the need to respond, unless I feel strongly about the subject at hand. I can tell you that after reading the previous post, by David M, I felt compelled to write.

Both the BOT and the BOR are extremely important respectively in what gets done in Gamblers Anonymous, on a daily basis. We both exchange thoughts which hopefully are for the betterment of Gamblers Anonymous. I certainly hope that all of us who are the trusted servants of our areas, follows these ideals, these values, as we serve the membership around the world.

There are many ideas that are discussed at a Trustee Meeting, as well as, at a

Board of Regents meeting. As a past trustee, there were several items that came to the floor and passed 1st votes, then passed a 2nd vote, items that I thought had no bearing, but it was the majority decision of the BOT that passed that item. Even though I was against that item, as a member, and as a trusted servant, my responsibility to my area and the fellowship as a whole, was to uphold the decisions of the Board of Trustees. I only have two options, to uphold those decisions, or to change it. That is how we progress. I think we take steps backwards when we start criticizing motives or intentions, just because we don't agree with them.

Not everyone believes in the same morals, but that is not a valid reason to undermine the work they are doing collectively as a whole. I personally feel like I would be doing a disservice to the fellowship by constantly trying to challenge those decisions. What kind of message would I be sending?

I was reminded recently, that when an item gets brought forth to the BOT, it is just that, an item, an idea. Once the BOT makes a motion and passes that item, 1st or 2nd vote, it then belongs to the BOT. So here's my question, why would the BOR still be responsible, if it now belongs to the BOT? If an agenda item either passes or fails, please don't go back to the author of the item and say "what were you thinking". Uphold the decisions of the BOT or propose a new agenda item to make a change.

With regards to Agenda Item #48, the reason why the BOR didn't discuss it was not because it passed a 1st vote in Cherry Hill. As per the By-Laws, we are due to discuss that item, along with any other By-Law items for the upcoming agenda in Cancun, at our September BOR meeting.

Lastly, it's very difficult to understand that someone had an "expectation that we might discuss an item", and yet failed to contact anyone to ask whether or not we would be discussing it. It's very simple, if anyone has something they would like to have the BOR discuss and put on the agenda, please contact me directly either via email or phone, and I will do my best to put it on. My information is on the Confidential Trustee Listing. I always try to make myself very accessible to those who need me, and will respond to your emails or phone calls as quickly as possible.

In closing, I have always believed that Gamblers Anonymous works much better when the BOT and BOR are working together. I have made a commitment to strengthen that bridge by having better communication with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.

Thanks for listening,

Steve F. - Area I, Los Angeles
Grateful Recovering Compulsive Gambler
Chairman, BOR

8/7/15 - 10:41 PM

Steve, very glad to see you changed your recent position from avoiding posting to at least being open to it. I'd say the Trustee Line is a useful tool even more so when the BOR get involved, hopefully it won't be just another hit and run visit, but a meaningful involvement. To be absolutely fair to you, Steve, and to any other BOR Chair I contacted, I always got a timely response.

Trustees and all, I have made the point before on the Trustee Line that anyone, particularly trusted servants of the fellowship, who places their serenity in the hands of the behaviour of others is not only looking in the wrong direction for the source of their disturbed serenity, but invariably also that so called serenity is really just a modified form of denial, not true serenity built on strong foundations, strong enough so that only that person and their higher power can truly affect it. That's the opinionated stuff out of the way and it's getting cold and lonely up here on the higher moral ground, so I'm coming down.

Of course both the BOR and BOT are important, yes it's good that the BOT is not just unilaterally blaming the BOR for this fiasco, but let's not disguise the fact that this item was put on the agenda by the BOR.

Let's look also at the idea in Steve's post that there is some similarity in the way the respective boards came to their respective decisions on this item.

The BOR discussions are not open and transparent in the same way as the BOT, they reject almost every item that seeks to improve that transparency, the BOR is also much more prone to being unduly influenced by a small number of people, as it is a much smaller group than the BOT (smaller than the Group known as the ISO even, Touché)

You asked this question, Steve,

“Not everyone believes in the same morals, but that is not a valid reason to undermine the work they are doing collectively as a whole. I personally feel like I would be doing a disservice to the fellowship by constantly trying to challenge those decisions. What kind of message would I be sending?”

My thoughts would be thus, if something as unconscionable as that item #48 has gotten as far as it did because we collectively failed to do anything about it because nobody wanted to upset the BOR applecart, that's the message that should not only be undermined but put right without delay. Of course the Process that led to that item #48 getting any kind of daylight should be questioned and fixed, as soon as possible.

The worry for me is that the source of that item #48 is not only apparently standing behind this fiasco but criticizing those who would rightly question and seek to change.

I have a serious problem with efforts by the BOR to stand back and say “We just had the idea, the BOT owns it, so sort it out“

Here's my first problem with that, the BOT vote was undoubtedly influenced by the passionate presentation by the BOR, just as I said it would be in my pre conference Trustee Line posting.

If that's a reflection of the type of pre meditated influence that is endemic in the BOR process, little wonder that a small few well intentioned but misguided members of the BOR could easily, and it would seem do regularly, cast undue influence on matters vital to the fellowship.

It matters little that we all have the right to set our own moral standards, we must at least try to follow the principles and not taking outside contributions is clear as day.

Hopefully the BOR can see that leaving until September the discussions on agenda items, under the pretext that they may otherwise end up discussing items that may be withdrawn, well, I never agree with that and as it happens, this #48 won't be withdrawn by the BOT, it can't be, so there is no excuse not to discuss it now and instead of being seen to abuse the process by leaving it late and justifying the unjustifiable and unconscionable on the floor, get it on the agenda and listen to what the members have to say. A simple leap of faith called transparency.

I don't know why the fact that the BOT had the decency to see if the BOR had the cop to put #48 on their agenda immediately is being thrown back at them, it was just decency and restraint, however, as always falls on deaf ears.

As I said, I'm very happy that there are those on the BOT who are prepared to accept our part in this fiasco, hopefully the BOR are genuinely open to a radical change in their process of decision making.

Talk is cheap, actions speaks louder.

Odie. B. - Area 36 trustee, Ireland S/E

8/9/15 - 12:18 PM

Dear David and Odie

I really don't know why both of you keep bringing up item # 48 from the Cherry Hill agenda and the BOR. Item number 48 did not come from the BOR it came from the Revenue Review Committee which was set up by the BOT and contains mostly Trustees and only a couple of BOR members. Please correct your statements.

Bob W. - Area 1B - Inland Empire, CA
Former Chairman BOR and BOT

8/9/15 - 3:06 PM

Bob,

Although I told myself that I am not going to do the tennis match 'tit for tat' thing, I thought it might be interesting to point out how the paper trail speaks very differently to your assertion that this was not a BOR item, but from the BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee. Below are excerpts from the BOR minutes, which were sent to every Trustee.

February 2015 BOR Minutes

B. DISCUSS G.A. BY-LAWS REGARDING DONATIONS. Discussion ensued regarding possibility of developing a new article to address adding/allowing donations from family and friends to our By-Laws. Motion to table until next

March 2015 BOR Minutes

C. DISCUSS ADDITION TO G.A. BY-LAWS FOR DONATIONS. Bob W. and Betty S. prepared and presented a By-Laws amendment that would enable the International Service Office (I.S.O.) to accept donations from family and friends of Gamblers Anonymous members in memory of members that have passed away.

The By-Law addition reads as follows:

Article XVIII to become Article XIX and new Article XVIII labeled Donations

Article XVIII Donations

Although the Guidance Code states Groups are self supporting and do not take outside donations the International Service Office (I.S.O.) can accept donations from family and friends of Gamblers Anonymous Members in memory of members that have passed away.

Steve F., Chairman of the B.O.R. read an email from the Trustees from Area 18, regarding their concerns of the I.S.O. allowing outside donations. The B.O.R. discussed this in length, and whether or not it is a violation of the Unity Program. It was determined that it was not a violation because the I.S.O. is not considered a Group. There was a motion made to approve the new By-Law change as read.

Motion seconded and passed For – 6 Against – 1 Abstained - 0

The roll call votes are as follows:

For - 6 Against - 1 Abstained - 0

Calvin C. Doug E. Betty S. Woodie H. Mike S. Bob W. Arnie B.

The above item will now go before the Board of Trustees for approval

Nothing in the minutes suggests that this was a subject brought to the BOR on the committee's behalf. If your statement is correct, then I put a few questions to you:

1 – If this was an idea from the committee, why wasn't that reflected in the minutes? The email from the Australian Trustees was mentioned. Why not this item?

2 – If it was an idea from the committee, why didn't the item get put on the agenda by a representative from the committee, like the other 3 that came from the committee for the Cherry Hill agenda? 3 – The Chairman of the BOR submitted the item on March 23rd for the Cherry Hill agenda. The item was not just presented on behalf of another member. It was presented with supportive discussion by the BOR Chair. How does that mean anything other than the BOR voting for it, approving and that it came as a result of BOR (supposed) due diligence?

Whatever the original intention behind this item, irrespective of the minutes reflecting that you and Betty S. crafted the presentation of this item, while still being members of the Committee, or the excuse that BOR Recording Secretary may have omitted information in the minutes, the final agenda is a BOR-sponsored item that violates Unity Step 7.

So Bob, in the spirit of being fair, can you please let me where my confusion lies, in view of all the evidence regarding BOR minutes, the Cherry Hill Agenda, how the item was pitched to the Trustees and by whom, and the actions the rest of us have witnessed?

I stand by I wrote previously, irrespective of what others who write to the contrary. Nothing can or should trivialize this effort to prevent our Fellowship from moving toward the edge of the cliff, over potential passage of this item and the detrimental effect it will have on the Fellowship. Making parallels that item 48 is like any other agenda item, defies belief and draws me to the conclusion that the those who feel this item should pass, really haven't read the Red Book explanation of Unity Step 7 and need to look inward as to why it is okay to rationalize this as something solid enough act this way.

Voting in favor of this on a 2nd vote in Cancun is not about progress and change for the better, it is about putting their name(s) on a declaration of not finding the Unity Steps to be worth following, because money is evidently our driving force for what is right.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

8/10/15 - 10:00 AM

Regarding the acceptance of contributions by the ISO from non-GA members, it seems clear there are at least two different viewpoints. I believe it is immaterial as to how and why the subject was approved by the BOR, and passed a first vote

by the BOT.

The real issue may be is the ISO part of Gamblers Anonymous, or is it separate? If, as some say, it is the business of Gamblers Anonymous, does this make it part of the program, and therefore should not accept any non-GA contributions. On the other hand, some say it is separate; if so, then it should be able to accept those contributions.

I am not conversant enough to discuss the history of the ISO, but it seems to be GA came first, and the ISO was created to accomplish certain aims of GA. To my mind, this would make the ISO part of GA.

If this discussion is about money, which it seems to be, why not just revisit the responsibilities of International Trustees, and require each of us to be a Lifeliner?

Jim G. - Area 6, Southern Florida

8/10/15 - 11:32 AM

The BOR gets bashed and blamed for lots of things but item 48 that Betty and I presented to the BOR came from the revenue review committee. The Revenue Review Committee was created by the BOT and was mostly Trustees. If the Revenue Review Committee was not mentioned in the minutes it was an oversight and sometimes oversights happen. Please leave the BOR alone and let them do what they were elected to do. All the bashing and blaming has caused GA members like myself to decline from running and it's getting to the point where we could have trouble getting 9 members to even run.

Bob W. - Area 1B, Inland Empire

Trusteeline aka "washline"

8/9/15 - 10:01 AM

New subject: Trusteeline aka "Washline" I ponder how the BOT has allowed the misguided information, for such a long time, that is twisted most of the time on the trusteeline. I choose to call it the "Washline". The handfuls that relentlessly write on the "Washline" always team up to make their minority voice heard. The belief must be that once it is written and repeated over and over it will become true- no matter what is written.

It is like the "MIRROR" or the "WEEKLY WORLD NEWS" rag newspapers, which puts ALIENS on the front cover. Trying to get everyone to cave in to wild stories. Sadly some believe them.

God forbid that it does not go their way. They than will crucified them on the WASHLINE and try to muster up trustees to fall into their ranks. Or better yet – put on the next agenda to rescind that item they are griping about. I have seen at least two items pass the 2 votes and than they put a rescind item on the next agenda. Where is acceptance?? Where are the principals over personalities – or is it personal principals?

Note: I know that this topic well bring out the all of the daggers and I can feel them sunken in my back already. Just sit back and watch the normal fireworks when some one challenges the controlling arm of the trusteeline.

Let's review this month items, so far, on the stories that can be twisted by the author(s).

Story #1 - Rush To Judgement

The story started out correct till right after the letters that went to ISO and NJIG. All of area 12 trustees were updated about this at our last trustee meeting. It was decided that one of our long-term trustee would handle it with the abuse pamphlet as the suggested guidelines. That trustee meet with the person in question at 8:30am and spent over 1 hour and half discussing all of the issues. He than updated all of the trustees and meet with the room in question. The room agreed to follow the guidelines.

Another trustee went to the second meeting, where the person in question had the same problem. That trustee had discussed the procedure and the room had also agreed to follow the suggested procedure. The person in question never showed up at that meeting.

Afterwards, the first trustee had followed up with the person to insure he was ok with what happened. He thanked the trustee for all the efforts he had done.

Both trustees had informed the entire NJIG trustee, including the author, that

they felt the item was handle properly and case close. All parties were informed and agreed to how the suggested procedure was done. The rooms and its member now understand the procedure, as well as the person that had first written ISO.

In my and the rest of our trustee felt it was followed in the best possible way with the suggested guidelines. Obviously, it is not to David M satisfaction or viewpoint.

The outcome is the author is allowed to publish his version on of the story on the Trusteeline., aka "Washline". Which is his right. However, never ever discuss it with the rest of the area 12 trustees. Whatever happened to group unity? I guess only when the shoe fits???

Story #2 - Unity Step 7

This time the minority handful does a tag team-wrestling match. Which discredits the efforts of the committee and the first vote passing. If it passes the second, which it should, there is no doubt that they will try a third time and put an item to reside it.

Here comes the same old attack on BOR on the "Washline". This is getting so old of a story. Instead of working towards unity and the spirit of what a fellowship should be, the minority would like to break down unity.

The author has been beating up, mocking, and ridiculing the BOR for over a decade at every whim he choses. His tagmate, an ex trustee from Ireland, has joined the match as well.

Note: Just take a look over the years and it becomes so bluntly clear. The minority has changed faces but the same old story. Check out how little the Trusteeline is used by other trustees, other than the minority.

I am going to keep this very short.

While, the authors, twist the problem that makes it appears to be the soul problem of the insidious, back room politics of the good ole boys, on the BOR.

The truth of the matter is that this item was part of the outcome of the BOR/BOT revenue Review Committee. This was bought up on the floor at the last BOT conference. The committee consists of just 2 BOR members and 9 BOT trustees. The majority of the committee, voted in favor of it Yet, the authors of the story has chosen to condemn the BOR and take the focus off the real truth.

Ask any of the committee to find out the truth – OR - believe what you read on the Trusteeline aka Washline.

BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee

Purpose:

Joint Committee of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents to review revenues and suggest methods to increase the revenue of the I.S.O

Item 48 – Cherry Hill

BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee: Committee Chair – Herb B. – Area 5 Co- Chair Liaison – Denis M. Mission Statement: Joint Committee of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents to review revenues and suggest methods to increase the revenue of the I.S.O. 5 The BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee of the Board of Trustees has posted 3 agenda items as suggestions and discussion for those who are interested. The idea is for these suggestions to be brought to Intergroups and Meetings to be discussed and hopefully used to help increase the revenue of the ISO. Members of the committee will discuss these suggestions and give their thoughts to the BOT when the items are introduced to the floor in Cherry Hill. We plan on proposing more ideas for increasing the ISO revenue at future Board of Trustee meetings. Herb B Committee Chairman Trustee Area 5 2nd Co-Chair of the BOT.

Again, Where is acceptance?? Where are the principals over personalities – or is it personal principals? Yes, this is a fellowship and every voice should be held. But, like in our rooms and the BOT meetings get up and give your war stories and sit down. Please, lets stop with the Washline and lets move on to more of what a fellowship should be about UNITY. Cause this is not about it and I do not enjoy writing about this.

Like Steve F. the Chair of the BOR had written. He felt compelled to make the attempt to clarify the subject and the Washline twisted his meaning. Just like Steve F, I felt compelled to defend what are the real stories.

The bottom line is the trustee line really in the spirit of our fellowship or is it a "WASHLINE" just to vent the minority? It would be a great tool if it were used, as it was design to be – rather than what it has become – a washline.

Gary S. - Area 12 Trustee, New Jersey

8/11/15 - 11:55 AM

To my fellow Trustees - both current and former -

I am sorely bothered by many - not all - comments made on the Trustee Line from time to time. The posting that began this thread, is especially so, due to its tone and content. Although no longer a current Trustee, like many members, I care and can learn from some of the statements made. I attend BOT meetings to listen about what others think. I learned very quickly in the Fellowship that my opinion is only one of many, and the minutes can only contain the results of a given agenda - not the opinions of others which generated the results. I, at times, wish all GA members could hear how and why results are reached. Not all Trustees are teachers.

Let us not forget there are many states and areas of our country - as well as other countries - who do not have Trustees and therefore do not have the advantage of knowing why an item may have passed. Frankly, I don't care if my opinion is on the "majority" side of the ledger, or the "minority" side. What matters to me is that I stay open-minded as I am still a learning equal member. I can learn from many sources, and the Trustee Line is but one of those sources. Like the microphone at a BOT meeting, the Trustee Line offers me the opportunity to read other opinions, but we don't refer to the speakers at a microphone as 'buffoons' - it is, after all, their opinion and we accept that.

Unity Step 1 reminds me that 'our common welfare should come first' and that my personal recovery depends on group unity - not if my group is on the minority side of an issue or the majority side. I try to make a choice based on the many opinions I hear, read or learn about. Am I always right? I doubt it. But I do try to learn something about myself and the Fellowship at every opportunity. If, after listening to others, or other opinions, some BOT members make the choice to rescind their vote, so be it - they may have learned something about themselves or the direction of the Fellowship - not as they would have it be, but perhaps as is best for all concerned. And who makes that decision? Is Unity Step 2 untrue? Do our Trusted Servants in fact govern?

With respect for all Gamblers Anonymous members,
Linda S. Area 7C - Oklahoma
Former Trustee Area 3A - San Diego

8/16/15 - 9:41 PM

In response to the opening post in this topic by Gary. S. and in particular the following comment quoted directly from the opening post,

"His tagmate, an ex trustee from Ireland, has joined the match as well. "

I would post only the following facts ;

1: There are no " Ex Trustees " in Ireland.

2 : Any issues I have discussed with or about the BOR / BOR process of decision making arise on my own behalf, mostly as a result of what I have witnessed on the floor of the BOT and in the BOR agendas. The genesis for these can be easily seen in my original open question on the trustee line to the then BOR chair.

These facts can be easily ascertained as absolute facts by a brief perusal of written records in the current Confidential Trustee Listing, previous BOT agenda reports and previous issues of the Trustee line.

Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland South East, Current Trustee

8/29/15 - 2:39 PM

Hi,

I am in favor of the trustee line the way it is. It gives a chance for trustees to vent either positive or negative things and maintain a line of communication. Back when I first became a trustee, the trustee line was in paper form and non responsive until the next edition came out. Now, if David or Gary or Odie or whoever else wants to post some, feedback can be almost instant. I don't recall if I have ever posted anything to the trustee line before. Many a time, I have felt like posting, but after a few minutes of putting finger to my keyboard I would delete what I had written.

We are in a modern world. We need a way to communicate amongst fellow trustees new or old ideas, or pass along our thoughts. Being a former member of the Board of Regents, I don't always like what David comments about the BOR, but without this forum, I wouldn't know his feelings. David, isn't one I exchange emails with a regular basis and thus see what his thoughts are on the trustee line. The same with Odie – I may not agree with his comments about anything – but on the trustee line, I can read his position on various issues. And Gary saying that the trustee line is a waste of time, is his opinion. I don't have 5 other trustees in my area, nor do I have 10 or more than trustees in any easy driving distance (Andy in Cherry Hill being near to New York City's 10 trustees). If anyone considers the trustee line to be a waste of time, than they should come up with a better idea to maintain communication amongst us and not put us back in the 1970s, 80s. Remember GA is a worldwide fellowship.....

Egos.... it is the person that puts the finger to the computer keyboard that has the ego. They are prepared to put there thoughts to the screen. Others like myself only sit back and read and not express our opinions.

See you all in Cancun. Well my thoughts and i am sticking to me and not pressing the delete button.

Thanks,
Richard C. - Area 2K – Southern Alberta Canada

Do We Really Need The Trustee Line

8/24/15 - 2:55 PM

The original purpose was to pass on information of value to the other Trustees. What it has a bitch session, where are the positive comments? Don't waste your time looking for them they are not there. You have a couple of people who respond to what anyone posts negatively and God forbid if you disagree with them.

So let's solve this problem once and for all. Time has come to do away with the trustee line and get back to the primary purpose of GA to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers. Novel concept I know.

In peace and serenity,
Tom M. - Area 2, Northern California

8/25 - 10:49 AM

Gee, Tom, guess you did not read my post re. appreciation of those who serve our fabulous fellowship a month or so ago. Often, people post positive items on the Trustee Line.

As far as "negative responders" are concerned, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Everyone has the option to contribute their own ideas on any relative topic. Powerful expressions should not be categorized as "negative" simply because people have differing ideas. The regular contributors on the site often invite provocative responses. Free speech is a beautiful thing. It is my hope that more people participate each month. David presents thought-provoking topics that generate real interest. Wish more trustees took the time to engage in the dialogue, and to submit additional, significant topics impacting recovering compulsive gamblers. May we hear what people are doing all over the world to help those who are still suffering?

Shutting down debate is unhealthy under any circumstances, Tom. Let's hear from more folks not less.

Respectfully,
Vinny B. - Area 12 Past Trustee, New Jersey

Further Information

8/24/15 - 6:05 PM

I noticed that 75% of the responses on a trustee poll item I submitted, regarding a committee to develop an all inclusive approach to a new literature item, indicated they would need, or at least consider, further information on the matter.

I can think of no better way to provide that information than here on the Trustee Line.

I'd be happy for any comments, whether approving or otherwise of the viability, practicality, necessity, desire or otherwise for such a committee.

I refer on this occasion to a Trustee Poll item as follows :

2. - To request the Chairman to form a new committee to liaise with every area in the Fellowship, with the purpose of Authoring a new literature item, to replace the current Day at a time book, ownership, copyright and editing control over which would rest with our fellowship

I posted this item to gauge the response of Trustees after it struck me, following an item on the agenda to allow an area compose a similar book in their own language, that I had heard somewhere that the ISO / Fellowship / Corporation does not own the copyright of the Day at a time book and that this is limiting.

It struck me that it might be possible, do - able and interesting for the fellowship to consider undertaking the task.

Following discussions, some ideas came to light suggesting that it may not be as insurmountable a task as it seemed, perhaps even something that could be financially beneficial over time.

So, the information, further information and some suggestions to date go like this.

1. A book, suggested titles including " Day by day in G. A. " be written with the input of all areas. I believe there are 51 or so areas at present ?
2. The copyright and ownership rests with the fellowship, as do editing and translation rights.
3. Starting with Area 1 for January 1st, and continuing on each area would be responsible for 7 or so pages in a 365 + page book.
4. Any area not wishing to do a particular date could just pass it on.
5. Dates could be single or block groups of dates.
6. Various suggestions regarding specific topics for specific time frames

Odie B. - Area 36 Trustee, Ireland South East

8/26/15 - 10:14 AM

Odie's request for suggestions for the contents of a new daily reader format intrigues me. How about the committee preparing 366 different words, quotes or sentences and have 366 individual members write their own thoughts and or interpretations within a 1 page format (same size as current "A Day at a Time" book)? The literature committee could review each submitted selection so that program tenants are not incorrectly stated as to our Recovery Steps & Unity.

As a word example, the word "Gratitude" could be defined by that member as to how he or she defines it, uses it and works it.

As a quote example, "One Day at a Time" could be defined by that member as to how they live their daily life.

As a sentence example, "What are the benefits of introspection" could have a list of a members responses.

Thus, if the topic is assigned we would not have duplications of ideas, writings or varied opinions of the same word so we could limit confusion.

This is my input and I am confident others will have many good ideas too.

Bill B. - Past Trustee, Area 6, South Florida

8/27/15 - 1:19 PM

To Odie:

Thank you for raising this subject on the Trustee Line. As a former trustee, I am not allowed to vote in the poll. but watch closely what does and does not 'make' the agenda, and then follow the results.

I have long been a supporter of our having a Meditation Book which supports GA policies, procedures and thinking. This is not to say that other meditation books do not serve a purpose - they certainly do. If they work for someone else and helps another in recovery, that is powerful. But for me to have a Meditation Book which coincides with tenets I am learning in GA can only enhance my recovery if I allow it to. With GA ownership, we would have the ability to re-write, amend, alter, add-to, subtract-from or change which we currently cannot do and I find that frustrating when I disagree with what is stated; I have learned to 'let it go.'

With love, faith, hope and respect for our Fellowship
Linda S - current member Area 7C - Oklahoma
Former Trustee, Area 3A - San Diego

8/28/15 - 10:39 AM

Here we go AGAIN twisting the facts and making them look like the old saying – “ A mountain out of a mole hill”.

Odie states – “I noticed that 75% of the responses on a trustee poll item I submitted, regarding a committee to develop an all inclusive approach to a new literature item, indicated they would need, or at least consider, further information on the matter.”

Lets look at the facts that make up Odie's Mountain/mole hill. As of the moment of this writing the so-call Trustee Poll is

If you go over to the trustee poll and review what Odie is referring to.

2. - To request the Chairman to form a new committee to liaise with every area in the Fellowship, with the purpose of Authoring a new literature item, to replace the current Day at a time book, ownership, copyright and editing control over which would rest with our fellowship.

Submitted by Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland Southeast on 07/26/2015

NOTE: this has been on the trustee poll for over a month with only 12 trustees that had responded.

There are only 12 (8.57%) of all trustees that responded to the poll, which is normal. However, only 6 (4.2%) had indicated that probably NOT in favor – but need to hear move. Now that is the prefect example of what I have been talking about twisted facts, about the Trusteeline AKA Soapline, I have been discussing this for years.

I totally agree with Tom when he states – “What it has a bitch session, where are the positive comments?”

There is nothing positive about the Soapline. The trustee body has allowed some egos to elevate to a new level - instead of inspiring Unity and a common path to recovery. The Soapline is detrimental to GA as a whole.

The Soapline has broken down unity. When you look back over the years there is less participation on the Soapline than on the Trustee Pole. The molehill looks larger only due to the same old members comment over and over and over– trying to create their own mountain to stand on and pound their chest to bitch.

When is Enough- Enough?

Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

8/28/15 - 12:36 PM

Interesting viewpoint Gary, I think I can see how you came to your conclusions. Insofar as part of your post relates to this topic, I humbly suggest the following:

The 6 who were probably not in favor and the 3 who were probably in favor equals 9 who indicated they would consider more information. 9 as a proportion of the 12 who responded is in fact 75% of “Those who responded “ so my facts were correct.

The final say will be on the floor so the actual amount who have responded to a very late entry by me on the Trustee poll was irrelevant to my submission on the Trusteeline.

Clearly it is important to you, as can be seen by the rest of your post, but that is a topic not only unconnected to this topic but already another topic submitted by you.

It's a pity if my enthusiasm for this idea upsets you but, as it happens, I thank you for the opportunity of stating one of my intentions, which can be clearly seen from my submission. That intention was to present a molehill of an idea and see if there was “ All inclusive “ support and desire within the fellowship to turn it into a mountain.

What a beautiful mountain that could turn out be, dwarfing even the Blue Ridge in possible scope or application.

Nonetheless, Gary, it is just a fledgeling idea, yet to be truly tested on the floor. There will doubtless be practicality, viability and other issues which The ISO, BOR and BOT may have a lot to say on, or the item may just fall flat on its face.

If that's the point you were making, Gary, I agree with you. I also trust we all agree 9 out of 12 is 75%

Bill and Linda, what wonderful, realistic, positive replies, with great ideas and

thought processes. Thank you for expanding my knowledge and outlook already and thank you especially for that little chink of hope.

With respect and in Unity,
Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland South East

new version