

February 18, 2008

Excerpt from the
June 20, 2007
Notice of Matters to Be Voted on
at the Annual Business Meeting of the
World Service Organization of Recovering Couples Anonymous:

Description of Topics and Wording of the Proposed Motions

Attached is an excerpt of the original June 20, 2007 notice. This excerpt of the original June 20, 2007 Notice has been prepared by the RCA WSO Structure Committee to provide background information for the member groups to consider when deciding on the two proposed amendments to the Bylaws that the delegate couples at the August 2007 business meeting voted to send to all member groups for by-mail voting.

The original notice included information on all seven topics that were considered at the August 2007 business meeting. Only the information relevant to the two proposed amendments to the Bylaws requiring current consideration by the Fellowship have been included in this excerpt. The information relative to the other five matters has been deleted from this excerpt.

Please note that the wording of the proposed amendments included in this excerpt is that originally considered at the 2007 business meeting prior to the modifications that were approved by the delegate couples attending the 2007 business meeting. This excerpt is provided as background information for consideration by any of the member groups who may wish to refer to it or who may wish to refresh their recollection of the matters considered at the 2007 business meeting.

Excerpt prepared by:

RCA WSO Structure Committee for 2007-2008

June 20, 2007

**Notice of Matters to Be Voted on
at the Annual Business Meeting of the
World Service Organization of Recovering Couples Anonymous**

Description of Topics and Wording of the Proposed Motions

Prepared by the RCA WSO Structure Committee

**Annual Business Meeting
Friday, August 3, 2007, St. Louis, Missouri
at the 2007 RCA Convention**

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Introduction

1. Notice is hereby provided to the RCA fellowship of the matters that will be considered at the RCA WSO annual business meeting on 3 August 2007. **This notice of the specific wording of each proposal to be considered is provided in order to comply with the notice requirements of the applicable Missouri law, that is notice after 4 June 2007 but before 4 July 2007.**

2. In a document dated May 3, 2007, notice of the topics to be considered was provided in order to meet the 90-day notice requirement of the bylaws so that by-mail voting would be permitted as to these topics.

3. Ballots will be provided to those RCA member groups whose delegate couples can not attend the business meeting and who wish to submit by-mail votes on the matters to be considered.

4. Each member group is asked to review the topics that are listed in this notice and to complete the process of determining the position, if any, that your group may wish to take on these matters. The primary purpose of the bylaw amendments adopted at the 2006 convention in Boston was to ensure that decisions made at the annual business meeting would be more reflective of the collective group conscience of the entire Fellowship, and not just be based on the views of those RCA members in attendance at the business meeting.

5. While it is recognized that there are many demands on the time of RCA members and that priority must be given to continued individual and couple recovery, each member group is requested, if you are at all able, to review these matters and to determine the position your group wishes to take with respect to each matter listed in this notice. **Thereby you will help ensure that actions taken at the annual business meeting will truly reflect the collective group conscience of the Fellowship.** It is recognized that some of these matters involve technical organization details that may be of little interest to many, if not most, RCA members and groups whose primary focus is appropriately on individual and couple recovery. But unfortunately it is details like these that are important to the efficient and effective operation of the RCA WSO as it attempts to provide necessary support to the Fellowship and to the member groups. If your group is uncertain as to the meaning and significance of any of the matters listed in this notice and if your group wishes, you might want to seek advice from long-time and trusted members of RCA as to their views on the merits of the various topics listed in this notice.

6. The topics are listed here in three categories: (1) proposed changes to the bylaws; (2) the establishment of special rules; and (3) general matters for approval by the Fellowship. **For each topic, there are three parts to the presentation that follows:**

- a. **Wording of May 3, 2007 Notice;**
- b. **Wording of Proposed Amendment, Rule, or Motion;**
- c. **Additional Discussion Relative to the Proposed Amendment, Rule, or Motion**

CATEGORY I: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BYLAWS

A. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES TO THE BYLAWS

Topic 1. No Successive Terms on the Board of Trustees

- a. Wording of May 3, 2007 Notice:** This is an amendment to the bylaws to restrict successive terms on the Board of Trustees so the bylaws will be in line with RCA custom and tradition. In accordance with the tradition of rotation, RCA members will be limited to no more than two terms on the Board of Trustees with a requirement that there must be a separation of at least five years between the two terms.
- b. Wording of Proposed Amendment to the Bylaws:**

The present bylaw provision covering terms on the Board of Trustees reads as follows:

- 4.1.5 Term.** All newly elected voting couples shall serve a term of two consecutive R.C.A. Conventions, with the option of serving through one additional convention provided they give the board timely notice of their intention prior to the end of their term. All newly elected alternates shall serve a term from one convention to the following convention.

The proposed amendment to the bylaws adds subsection 4.1.5.1 to section 4.1.5:

- 4.1.5.1 *Limitation on Terms.*** *The following term limitations apply to service on the Board of Trustees:*

a. No RCA member shall serve more than two terms as a voting member of the Board of Trustees irrespective of the length of either term; that is irrespective of whether either term is the basic term of two consecutive annual conventions, the optional, extended term of three consecutive annual conventions, or a term of a lesser duration.

b. Successive terms are prohibited: there shall be a separation of at least five consecutive annual conventions between the completion of the member's first term as a voting member of the Board of Trustees and the commencement of the member's second and final term as a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

c. No RCA member shall serve as an alternate member of the Board of Trustees if that member is barred from serving as a voting member by the limitation on the number of terms or by the required duration between the two permissible terms of service.

c. Additional Discussion Relative to the Proposed Amendment

These Limitations Are Consistent with RCA Custom and Practice: The long-standing custom and practice within the RCA WSO had been for couples on the Board of Trustees not to serve successive terms on the board. This custom and practice was not followed at the 2006 convention in Boston. The major purpose of this amendment is to restore the long-standing custom and practice within the RCA WSO.

These Limitations Are Consistent with RCA Traditions: RCA Tradition 2 enunciates several principles which are relevant to these limitations.

“Rotation of officers gives equal opportunity to serve, and puts the authority with our Higher Power. In this tradition there is equality among all of us”

And further (emphasis supplied):

“The group conscience is what governs the group, and we all help to form this conscience, by discussion. **We set limits on holding office.** We share the workload.”

Moreover, “couples [must be] dedicated to serving and not controlling or directing. The positions do not give authority to them, nor is there a chain of command or ‘mom & pop’ couple.” **RCA Tradition 9** is also relevant (emphasis supplied):

“RCA, like AA, is a fellowship where there are no leaders but only trusted servants. **The duties and terms of these servants are limited.** . . . **These positions rotate on a regular basis** so that all couples involved have a chance to share the responsibility. No couple directs and no couple controls the other members.”

These are basic principles in 12-step organizations. The limitations included in the proposed amendment to the bylaws are modeled after those of Co-Dependents Anonymous. The CODA bylaws limit members to two, three-year terms on the CODA board of trustees, with the requirement that there must be at least a three-year interval between these two terms.

Explanation of Wording of the Proposed Amendment: The wording of the proposed amendment uses the number of **consecutive annual conventions** rather than the number of **years** because in the past, and likely in the future, the duration between annual conventions has not always been exactly one year. Moreover, the basic provision on terms, section 4.1.5, is expressed in terms of the number of **consecutive annual conventions** and not in terms of **years**. As a further explanation, it is helpful to note that:

“Two consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to two years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end;”

“Three consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to three years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end;”

“Five consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to five years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end.”

The wording of the proposed amendment was chosen over an alternative one-sentence version of the amendment to avoid any ambiguity in the proposed amendment. For example, the essence of the proposed modification could be captured in the following sentence: “No RCA member shall serve more than two terms as a voting member of the Board of Trustees with a required separation of at least five consecutive annual conventions between the two terms.” This simpler version of the proposed amendment leaves open a number of questions that the longer, proposed version attempts to answer explicitly.

Background to the Proposal: Until the 2006 convention in Boston, the custom and practice within RCA was for couples not to serve successive terms on the Board of Trustees. Since, at the 2006 convention, the Fellowship was not permitted to enforce the long-standing custom and practice prohibiting consecutive terms on the Board of Trustees, it has become prudent to incorporate this amendment into the bylaws

Topic 2. An Independent Ethics Committee:

a. Wording of May 3, 2007 Notice:

Because of certain conflicts that arose within the RCA WSO, last year’s Board of Trustees, the 2005-2006 board, established an Ethics and Twelve-Traditions Committee in January 2006. The long-time RCA members serving on this original Ethics committee concluded that they were not able to properly deal with the conflicts presented to them for resolution because of interference from the Board of Trustees. The purpose of this amendment is to establish the Ethics committee as an independent committee (independent of the Board of Trustees) reporting directly to the Fellowship so as to ensure that there will be an effective “right of appeal” for all RCA members within the RCA WSO. Thus RCA will have a “right of appeal” analogous, but not identical, to that embodied in Concept V of the 12 Concepts of Service within Alcoholics Anonymous. This year’s Ethics Committee is currently working on the details of the wording of the proposed change to the bylaws to establish an independent Ethics Committee. **(The following proposed amended is presented to the Fellowship by this year’s Ethics Committee.)**

b. Wording of Proposed Amendment to the Bylaws

Add to the bylaws a new Article which reads as follows:

“Article VII: Ethics and Twelve-Traditions Committee

- 7.1 *Independence:*** *The Ethics and Twelve-Traditions Committee (hereafter Ethics Committee) is established as an independent committee within the World Services Organization; that is, it is independent from the WSO Board of Trustees and reports directly to the Fellowship.*
- 7.2 *Purpose:*** *The purpose of the Ethics Committee is to provide a forum for any member of the RCA fellowship to file a grievance or complaint, without any fear of prejudice, reprisal, or retaliation, about any matter involving the WSO organization or any of its organizational elements (including the Board of Trustees) or any individual providing service within the WSO. Matters within the scope of the Ethics Committee’s responsibility include grievances and complaints regarding personal matters as well as matters involving ethical concerns or alleged violations of the Twelve Traditions of RCA. As a support to acting within the 12 Traditions, the Ethics Committee can also be used as a forum for the Board or a member of the Board to address an issue with any RCA member that has been irresolvable.*
- 7.3 *Objective:*** *It is anticipated that there will be infrequent need for an RCA member to present any matter to the Ethics Committee, with the very existence of the committee serving as a restraint on those in authority or those providing service within the WSO. The intent is for the existence of the committee to discourage any unjust or improper use of that authority and any other unjust or improper action within the WSO. Whenever requested by a Board member or RCA member, the Board will refer a matter to the Ethics Committee for review. The discretion of a review will lie with the Committee, not the Board.*
- 7.4 *Notification to the Board of Trustees and the Fellowship.*** *The Ethics Committee shall provide notification to the Board of Trustees and the Fellowship of all matters that are brought to its attention to the extent the committee deems notice to be appropriate.*
- 7.5 *Conflict Resolution and Mediation:*** *The Ethics Committee shall attempt to resolve all matters brought before it using those conflict resolution methods it deems appropriate. When it deems it appropriate, the Ethics Committee may request that a qualified RCA member serve as a mediator in the resolution of a particular conflict.*
- 7.6 *Communications with the Fellowship:*** *The Ethics Committee shall have the availability of all means of communications with the fellowship that are available within the WSO including: newsletter notices; the sending of materials directly to the GCCs for each member group; and the posting of materials on the RCA WSO website.*

- 7.7 **Annual Report:** *The Ethics Committee shall submit an annual report to the fellowship at the annual business meeting.*
- 7.8 **Ethics Committee: Composition; Qualifications; Election; and Term of Office.**
- 7.8.1 **Composition:** *The Ethics Committee shall consist of three RCA members.*
- 7.8.2 **Qualifications:** *RCA members serving on the Ethics Committee shall meet the following qualifications:*
1. *An active member of RCA with at least 12 months as an active member in RCA or in an individual, 12-step recovery program.*
 2. *Experience in conflict resolution or a former member of the RCA Board of Trustees.*
 3. *A former board member shall not be eligible to serve on the committee until at least three consecutive conventions have passed since service on the board was concluded.*
- 7.8.3 **Election:** *Members of the Ethics Committee shall be elected at the annual business meeting following the same procedures used to elect members of the Board of Trustees.*
- 7.8.4 **Term of Office:** *The term of office for committee members shall be three consecutive RCA annual conventions. The terms of the three members of the committee shall be staggered so that one new member is elected at each convention. Any member elected to fill a vacant position on the committee shall be elected to the remaining portion of the term of member whose departure created the vacancy. To establish the staggered terms (with one new member elected to the committee at each convention, beginning with the second convention of the committee's operation): the initial three members elected to the committee will have terms of two consecutive conventions, three consecutive conventions, and four consecutive conventions respectively. After these initial terms are completed, all subsequent terms shall be limited to three consecutive conventions.*
- 7.8.5 **Successive Terms:** *No RCA member may serve successive terms on the committee. There must be a gap of at least five consecutive conventions between terms on the committee and no member may serve more than two terms on the committee.*
- 7.9 **Policies and Procedures:** *The committee may establish policies and procedures to guide its operations. Any policies and procedures adopted by the committee shall be made available to the fellowship.*

7.10 Subcommittees: *The committee is authorized to establish any subcommittees it deems appropriate.*”

c. Additional Discussion Relative to the Proposed Amendment

Prior to this time the only committees within the RCA WSO have been committees reporting to the Board of Trustees, pursuant to the provisions of the bylaws authorizing such committees. But committees reporting directly to a fellowship or assembly are a common feature of many organizations and are discussed extensively in Robert’s Rules of Order.¹ In fact, Robert’s Rules contains far more coverage of committees reporting to the fellowship or assembly than it does of committees reporting to boards of trustees.²

The wording of the proposed amendment uses the number of **consecutive annual conventions** rather than the number of **years** because in the past, and likely in the future, the duration between annual conventions has not always been exactly one year. It is helpful to note that:

“Two consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to two years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end;”

“Three consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to three years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end;”

“Four consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to four years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end;”

“Five consecutive RCA contentions” is approximately equal to five years, depending on the exact dates at which the conventions end.”

¹ See *Robert’s Rules*, 10th edition, at § 50 page 471, line 30 through page 485, line 6.

² In *Robert’s Rules*. 10 edition, compare § 49 page 467, line 30, through page 468, line 6 (committees reporting to a board) with § 50 page 471, line 30 through page 485, line 6 (committees reporting to a fellowship or assembly).