

February 18, 2008

**Notice to RCA Member Groups
of
By-Mail Voting on Two Proposed Amendments to the RCA WSO Bylaws:
Sent to the Member Groups by Direction of the Delegate Couples
Voting at RCA 2007 Business Meeting**

Notice Prepared by the RCA WSO Structure Committee

**Reminder:
Ballots to Be Sent to:**

**RCA WSO
c/o Robert Frey
P.O. Box 2173
Walnut Creek, CA 94595-0173**

for Receipt on or before May 23, 2008

Table of Contents

Item	Page
Introduction.	1
1. By-mail voting on two proposed bylaw amendments.....	1
2. At the direction of the fellowship.	1
3. Overview of the two amendments.	1
4. Availability of ballots.....	1
5. Seeking the collective group conscience of the entire fellowship.	1
6. If your group is at all able to participate, voting on these proposals is important step-12 service work.	1
7. Presentation format.	2
I. Proposed Amendment 1: Modification of the provision covering limitation of terms on the board of trustees.....	2
A. Background to the consideration of this matter at the August 2007 business meeting.....	2
B. Action taken on this matter by the fellowship at the August 2007 business meeting.....	2
C. Explanation of the proposed amendment to the provision on limitation of terms.....	3
II. Proposed Amendment 2: Establishment of an independent Ethics Committee.....	3
A. Background to the consideration of this matter at the August 2007 business meeting.....	3
B. Action taken on this matter by the fellowship at the August 2007 business meeting.....	5
C. Explanation of the proposed amendment to establish an independent Ethics Committee.	6

Introduction

1. **By-Mail Voting on Two Proposed Bylaw Amendments:** Notice is hereby provided to all member groups of the RCA fellowship of two proposed amendments to the bylaws of the RCA World Service Organization (WSO). These matters will be voted on by mail by the RCA member groups. Under the provisions of the RCA WSO bylaws, the member groups are provided 90 days to review matters voted on by mail. The by-mail ballots must be received at the RCA WSO office in Oakland, California not later than May 19, 2008.

2. **At the Direction of the Fellowship:** The delegate couples in attendance at the August 2007 business meeting in St. Louis voted to send these two proposed amendments to all member groups in the Fellowship for by-mail voting.

3. **Overview of the Two Amendments:** These two amendments involve matters that were voted on at the August 2007 business meeting both by the delegate couples present and by those member groups that submitted by-mail ballots. The first proposed by-law amendment modifies the provision covering the limitations on the terms of members of the RCA WSO board of trustees by deleting the limitation to only two terms while retaining the prohibition on successive terms.

The second proposed amendment establishes an independent Ethics Committee that reports directly to the Fellowship. The specifics of each proposed amendment will be discussed in detail below in this notice.

4. **Availability of Ballots:** Ballots will be provided to all RCA member groups. A copy of the ballot and this notice will be e-mailed to the Group Contact Couples for each member group. Additionally, both the ballot and this notice will be posted on the RCA website. The Outreach Committee will also notify the Fellowship of the availability of the ballot and notice and of the time line applicable to the by-mail voting process. **Remember that each member group gets only one vote on these proposed changes to the bylaws.**

5. **Seeking the Collective Group Conscience of the Entire Fellowship:** Each member group is asked to review this notice and begin the process of determining the position, if any, that your group may wish to take on these two proposed amendments. The primary purpose of the bylaw amendments adopted at the 2006 RCA convention in Boston was to ensure that decisions made with respect to the RCA WSO 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 annual business meeting.

6. **If Your Group Is at All Able to Participate, Voting on these Proposals Is Important Step-12 Service Work:** While the Structure Committee recognizes 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 two proposals and to determine the position your group wishes to take with respect to each. **Thereby you will help ensure that actions taken with respect to the operation of the RCA WSO will truly reflect the collective group conscience of the Fellowship.**

It is recognized that 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 discussed 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 two proposed amendments described in this notice.

7. Presentation Format: The information on each of two proposed bylaw amendments is presented in three subsections:

- a. Background to the consideration of this matter at the August 2007 business meeting.
- b. Action taken on this matter by the Fellowship at the August 2007 business meeting.
- c. Explanation of the proposed amendment.

I. Proposed Amendment 1: Modification of the Provision Covering Limitation of Terms on the Board of Trustees.

A. Background to the Consideration of this Matter at the August 2007 Business Meeting.

Until the 2006 RCA annual convention in Boston, the custom and practice within RCA was for couples not to serve successive terms on the Board of Trustees. At the 2006 convention, the Fellowship was not permitted by the then current board to enforce the long-standing custom and practice prohibiting consecutive terms on the Board of Trustees. Thus, the RCA WSO Structure Committee for 2006-2007 thought it was prudent to incorporate a specific amendment on limitations of terms into the bylaws. For anyone who wishes to review additional background information, an excerpt containing the information provided to the Fellowship in June 2007 prior to the August business meeting is posted on the website along with this notice and a copy of the mail-in ballot.

B. Action Taken on this Matter by the Fellowship at the August 2007 Business Meeting.

This matter was voted on at the August 2007 business meeting and a new section 4.1.5.1 covering limitations on terms was added to the bylaws and has been in effect since its adoption. This new provision was adopted by the required 75 percent majority (Delegates: 16 for, 7 against; By-mail: 8 for, 0 against; **Total: 24 for, 7 against (77.4 percent for)**). The delegates at the business meeting voted by a large majority to amend the new provision and to submit the proposed amendment to the Fellowship for by-mail voting.

C. Explanation of the Proposed Amendment to the Provision on Limitation of Terms.

The amendment to the bylaws that was approved at the August 2007 business meeting added a provision covering limitation of terms on the board of trustees. There are two aspects of this limitation. The first limitation is that there must be a separation of at least five successive annual conventions (nominally five years) between terms on the board. The second limitation was that no member could serve more than two terms on the board of trustees. Since this proposal was approved at the business meeting by the required 75 percent vote, it is currently part of the RCA WSO bylaws.

The amendment to the original proposal was to delete the limitation of no more than two terms. The view of those making and supporting this amendment was that the required separation of five consecutive conventions (nominally five years) between terms on the board was sufficient to ensure the required rotation of positions that is a fundamental tradition in 12-step organizations. Thus, they felt that there was no real need to have the two-term limitation, a limitation that in the future might deny the fellowship the service of an experienced couple willing to serve again on the board of trustees.

This amendment was approved by a large majority of the delegate couples voting at the 2007 business meeting and is now presented to all of the member groups for consideration. Each member group needs to give serious consideration to this proposed amendment.

The 2007-2008 Structure Committee recommends a vote in favor of this amendment.

Rather than repeating here the specific wording of the current provision and of the proposed amendment, you are referred to the ballot for the complete wording. A copy of the current version of the entire bylaws is available for downloading from the RCA website. And, as was noted earlier, for anyone who wishes to review additional background information, an excerpt containing the information on the term-limitation provision that was provided to the Fellowship in June 2007 prior to the August business meeting is posted on the website along with this notice and a copy of the mail-in ballot.

II. Proposed Amendment 2: Establishment of An Independent Ethics Committee.

A. Background to the Consideration of this Matter at the August 2007 Business Meeting.

So that the RCA member groups can understand the motivation behind the proposed amendment to establish an independent Ethics Committee, it is unfortunately necessary to review a major controversy that arose within the Fellowship during the term of the 2005-2006 board of trustees. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to ensure that such a controversy never again occurs within the RCA WSO. Sweeping matters under the rug and pretending that they never happened is not an appropriate solution for an organization that is based on 12-step principles. Rigorous honesty requires that the issue be faced unflinchingly.

In December 2005, the RCA WSO's board of trustees, the 2005-2006 board, took disciplinary action against an RCA member such that the member was "suspended from service

positions for three months.”¹ The board’s actions were mentioned, somewhat cryptically, on pages one and two of the Winter 2005 Hand-in-Hand.² In January 2006 the board received a letter from an RCA member noting that the board’s action was improper and illegal because the board did not have the authority to take disciplinary action against a member without following the procedures specified in Robert’s Rules of Order, procedures required to be followed both by the RCA WSO bylaws and controlling Missouri law. Missouri law controls because the RCA WSO is incorporated as a Missouri not-for-profit corporation.

As that board noted in the minutes of its January 28, 2006 meeting that are posted on the RCA WSO website, in response to the letter it had received, the 2005-2006 board, established an Ethics and Twelve-Traditions Committee, a committee to report to the board of trustees. The 2005-2006 board limited membership on this committee to former members of the board of trustees.

After several months of work the long-time RCA members, all former board 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 report of that original Ethics Committee never saw the light of day. Because of this and related controversies, many RCA members attending the August 2006 business meeting in Boston were concerned about the future of RCA. A number of members approached the Boston business meeting with a great sense of dread. Some of these members were of the opinion that the only way to resolve the controversy would be to form a new organization.

Much to the surprise of many of the concerned members, the Fellowship spoke out at the business meeting with some major changes to the bylaws enacted and with a number of members newly elected to the board of trustees for 2006-2007. An early action taken by the 2006-2007 board was to open up membership on the Ethics Committee to members with experience in conflict resolution as an alternative to being a former board member. The Ethics Committee for 2006-2007 was asked to look at the problems that had occurred and to consider whether an independent Ethics Committee might be desirable. An independent Ethics Committee would be independent of the board of trustees and would report directly to the Fellowship.

The 2006-2007 Ethics Committee prepared a proposed amendment to the RCA by-laws to establish an independent Ethics Committee. The specific wording of the amendment was sent out to the Fellowship in June 2007 and voted on by the Fellowship at the August 2007 business meeting. For anyone who wishes to review additional background information, an excerpt containing the information provided to the Fellowship in June 2007, prior to the August business meeting, is posted on the website along with this notice and a copy of the mail-in ballot.

¹ This quotation is from the letter dated December 19, 2005, from the Board to the member in which this disciplinary penalty was imposed on the member. This letter was sent to the member by e-mail dated December 23, 2005.

² At the heart of this matter was an e-mail that the member sent to the Board of Trustees and the Outreach Committee complaining that an officer of the Board was failing to take a necessary action.

B. Action Taken on this Matter by the Fellowship at the August 2007 Business Meeting.

This matter was voted on at the August 2007 business meeting and the proposed change to the bylaws to establish an independent Ethics Committee was not adopted. This new provision failed to receive the required 75 percent majority (Delegates: 13 for, 10 against; By-mail: 6 for, 2 against; **Total: 19 for, 12 against (61.3% for)**).

While the delegates at the convention indicated substantial support for an independent Ethics Committee, a number of the delegates felt that several modifications to the proposed bylaw change were required. The delegates modified the proposal for an independent Ethics Committee and directed that the modified proposal be presented to the member groups for by-mail voting.

There were three amendments to the proposal that were adopted by the delegates. First, the delegates adopted a modification that deleted a provision in the original proposal that required a member of the committee to have the following qualification: "*Experience in conflict resolution or a former member of the RCA Board of Trustees.*" As a result all RCA members would be eligible to serve on the committee.

Second, the delegates adopted a modification to another provision in the original proposal that required a member of the committee to have the following qualification: "*An active member of RCA with at least 12 months as an active member in RCA or in an individual, 12-step recovery program.*" This provision was modified to read: "*An active member of RCA with at least 12 months as an active member in RCA.*" Thus, experience in another 12-step fellowship could not be substituted for experience in RCA.

The third change was a change consistent with the delegate's modification to the provision covering the limitation of terms for board-of-trustee members. The original proposal had limited members to just two terms on the Ethics Committee. Again the delegates were of the opinion that the required separation between term on the committee of five consecutive conventions (nominally five years) was sufficient to ensure rotation of membership. Thus the delegates modified the proposal by deleting the two-term limitation.

Another proposed modification was considered but did not receive the support of a majority of the delegates. That proposed modification was to increase the membership on the committee from three to seven members.

One delegate spoke in vigorous opposition to an independent Ethics Committee asserting that such a committee would interfere with the necessary authority posited in the board of trustees. The response given to this objection was that in fact the committee was given no authority to compel the board to take any action. The committee would have a limited, oversight role, and its only authority was its ability to express an independent opinion directly to the Fellowship.

Another delegate raised the question of the whether the committee would properly respect the privacy rights of those involved in any conflict that might arise. The good judgment of any member elected to the committee is the protection to any concerns as to the committee respecting the privacy of anyone involved in a controversy within the RCA WSO.

There is one other advantage of having an independent Ethics Committee: it will free the board of trustees from having to deal initially with individual complaints that may arise within the operation of the RCA WSO. Most members of the board have limited amounts of time to devote to the business of the board. Having an independent Ethics Committee to attempt to resolve controversies that arise will allow the board members to focus their efforts on the operations of the RCA WSO.

C. Explanation of the Proposed Amendment to the Provision on Limitation of Terms.

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.³

As is expressly stated in the proposed amendment, a basic objective is for the existence of the independent committee to serve as a major deterrent to any improper actions within the RCA WSO: *“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.”*

The 2007-2008 Structure Committee recommends a vote in favor of this amendment to the bylaws to establish an independent Ethics Committee.

Rather than repeating here the specific wording of the proposed amendment, you are referred to the ballot for the complete wording. A copy of the current version of the entire bylaws is available for downloading from the RCA website. And, as was noted earlier, for anyone who wishes to review additional background information, an excerpt containing the information on the proposed independent Ethics Committee that was provided to the Fellowship in June 2007, prior to the August business meeting, is posted on the website along with this notice and a copy of the mail-in ballot.

³ “The traditional “Right of Appeal” should also permit any person in our service structure, whether paid or unpaid, to petition for the redress of a personal grievance, carrying his complaint, if he so desires, directly to the General Service Board. **He or she should be able to do this without prejudice or fear of reprisal.** Though in practice this will be a seldom exercised right, its very existence will always tend to restrain those in authority from unjust uses of their power.” Concept V, *The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts For World Service* (2007-2008 edition) (in pertinent part; emphasis supplied). The manual with the concepts can be downloaded from the A.A. website: www.AA.org.