

## EMAIL TO TEST ELECTRONIC VOTING .....??

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- How many of you saw the email from:
  - Elizabeth Secretary (a pseudonym I made up for this purpose)
  - Elizabeth Secret..... (cut off if the window was too narrow)
  - SCWS Elections? (new pseudonym)
- Most DRs sent me the email addresses for the first round of testing of electronic voting.
- How many of you voted using this Ballot/Survey?
  - 506 GRs/DRs were invited, 130 have voted (~25%)
  - Reminder invitation sent yesterday (Friday)
- Let's work on it together at lunch today!  
...or tomorrow from home

# **TASK FORCE ON ELECTIONS/VOTING**

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## **THE CHARGE**

To investigate and evaluate SCWS election procedure and voting procedures.

To develop strategies to present which may propose new policies or work on existing policies.

To prepare report detailing conclusions and proposed strategies.

**November 2013**

## HISTORY/BACKGROUND

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- **Election Assembly:**
  - Once every 3 years. Next: Nov 2014
  - Primary purpose (Service Manual):
    - Elect AFG Area Officers
    - Also, Conduct other Area business
- **Feedback from November 2011 Election Process**
  - Many hours: hand-count and meet required % majority votes
  - Left limited time for other Area business
  - Assembly members asked for:
    - More efficient election process
    - To be better informed about candidates (KBDM)

- SCWS elects its officers every three years at the Election Assembly (Nov 2014 is the next one).
- According to the Service Manual, electing the officers is the primary reason for this Assembly,  
but of course there also is Area business to conduct.

For every election, it takes multiple rounds of voting to meet the required percentages for a majority vote, according to the Service Manual.

In Nov 2011, the election process took even longer than usual to hand-count the ballots, which limited the time available to conduct other Area business.

- Assembly members voiced frustration and concern, asking if somehow we could become more efficient.
- Group Representatives also expressed a desire to be better able to know the candidates.

As a result, this Task Force on Elections and Voting was formed...  
to address these concerns of the Assembly  
and to propose ways to improve this process.

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## TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

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- **Task Force on Elections and Voting**
  - 1 Assembly voting member (GR)
  - 5 past delegates
  - 1 officer

- The Task Force on Elections and Voting is composed of...
- 1 voting member of the Assembly – a Group Representative
- 5 past delegates
- 1 officer

TF members:

- 1 voting member of the Assembly – a Group Representative
- 5 past delegates
- 1 officer

Weekly conference calls have been held since June.

The presentation today is a brief recounting of the work of this TF, and a discussion of the strategies proposed by the TF on elections and voting.

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## FACETS OF TASK FORCE CHARGE

- Facet 1: Streamlining election and voting procedures
  - Separate day? Longer day? ... for Election Assembly?
  - Electronic voting?
- Facet 2: Pre-registration date for GRs to vote
- Facet 3: When/what do we need to know,  
to choose Area Officers?
  - When to declare interest in being a candidate?
  - Job Descriptions and Service Resumes

The Task Force identified 3 facets to this issue.

Facet 1: Streamlining the Election and voting procedures.

- Some Areas have 2-day or 3-day Assemblies, whereas we have 1-day Assemblies for Southern California World Service.

The Election Assembly occurs once every 3 years and also is a single day.

What can we do to conduct a reasonable amount of business on an Election Assembly day?

Shall we consider a 3rd Assembly once every 3 years, just for the election?

- How about extending the Election Assembly one hour earlier or later, or both?
- How about trying electronic voting, which started in 2013 at the World Service Conference?

Facet 2: Shall we reconsider a pre-registration date of Group Representatives prior to the Assembly to be eligible to vote?

This is a past practice in SCWS.

Facet 3: When/what do we need to know, in order to choose the Area Officers?

- When would one declare one's interest in being a candidate?

Currently, Assembly members find out AT the Election Assembly who the candidates are, ...

according to who stands to show their eligibility and ...

who remains standing, to show their willingness and readiness for the position.

- Could that be changed to being PRIOR to the Election Assembly?
- With job descriptions, voters and candidates get to know the Area Officer positions. With a service resume required, the voters get to know the candidates prior to the Election Assembly.

Job descriptions would show voters and candidates what is expected to carry out the responsibilities of each Officer position, such as...

the tasks that need to be done,

## KNOWLEDGE-BASED DECISION MAKING, KBDM

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- 1. What do we know about our **membership's needs**, wants and preferences that are relevant to this discussion? For this purpose, "membership" is this body (**Assembly**) [meeting, District, Board, Conference, etc.]
- 2. What do we know about our "capacity" (**resources**) and **strategic position** of our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion?
- 3. What do we know about the **current realities** and evolving dynamics of our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion?
- 4. What are the **ethical implications** of our choices? (**Pros/Cons**) *What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others*
- 5. What do we **wish we knew** but don't? *Maybe one of these questions is "What are the unintended consequences of our actions?"*

You have a handout with these 5 Questions of KBDM that are to be considered by any ThF or TF.

KBDM question 1 investigates our membership's needs, in this TF it is for the Assembly.

KBDM question 2 is about our resources and strategic position of our fellowship.

KBDM question 3 looks at the currently realities of our fellowship's environment.

KBDM question 4 considers the ethical implications, meaning how our choice will affect others.

KBDM question 5 asks us to think about what we wish we knew but don't, and what might be some unintended consequences of our actions.

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## SUMMARY OF 5 QUESTIONS

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- **Issues we have identified**
  - Need more efficient election process, KBDM
  - New GRs may not know what Area elected positions entail
  - Using paper ballots is time consuming
- **Strategies we would like to try**
  - Job Descriptions & Candidate Resumes: informed decision
  - More efficient voting method (electronic voting)
  - Earlier registration date for GRs and AGRs

To understand the situation better, the TF answered the Five Questions of KBDM on all the facets of the charge.

You have a 2-page stapled handout with the findings from the Five Questions. Those answers and this presentation will be posted on the SCWS website.

Today's presentation summarizes those findings.

Here is a summary of those details.

The TF has identified 3 issues.

- Assembly members want and need a more efficient election process that uses more Knowledge-Based Decision Making.
- Since 1/3 of the districts rotate each year, some GRs are new and may not know what the Area elected positions entail, and/or may be unfamiliar with the service structure.
- It is time consuming to use paper ballots. They have to be collected, unfolded, read (sometimes that means ...DECIPHERED), sorted into piles, counted and re-counted.

This TF proposed 3 strategies we would like to try...

- To have job descriptions and candidates' resumes available prior to the Election Assembly for Group Representatives to review.
- To develop a different, more efficient voting method.

To set a final date for groups to register Group Representatives AND Alternate Group Representatives prior to the Assembly.

Let us consider these 3 strategies.

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## **STRATEGY ONE—OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

### **Develop comprehensive standardized officer job descriptions**

- Duties, responsibilities, realistic time commitment
- Skills/technology, talents, and/or other relevant experience needed

### **Reasons for this strategy**

- Voters and candidates: info of what is required of Area Officers
- Potential candidate: do I have what it takes?
- Membership: a better understanding of:
  - Service structure
  - Selecting the most qualified candidate for each Area Officer position

Strategy ONE: Develop comprehensive, STANDARDIZED officer job descriptions detailing:

- Duties and responsibilities, a realistic time commitment for each position
- Skills or talents needed (being able to use a computer, email with attachments, leadership experience and skills, demonstrated specific accounting experience for Treasurer)
- etc.

Reasons for this strategy

- Supplies candidates and voters with information of what is required of Area Officers, so everyone has a more complete picture of what is required
- The potential candidate can ask, ...do I have the skills needed? Do I have the experience? The Availability?

In other words, am I prepared for the time commitment and duties of the position?

- The membership would get a better understanding of the service structure
- and selecting the most qualified candidate for each Area Officer position
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## **STRATEGY TWO—OFFICER RESUME**

### **Develop standardized resume form for officer candidates**

- Brief – one page
- Available on SCWS website

### **Reasons for this strategy:**

- Completed resumes available to all voters prior to Election Assembly
- Standardized form: equal comparison of candidates
- Candidates can refer to their resume at the mic

Strategy TWO: Develop a standardized resume form for all officer candidates.

- Many GRs are new and don't know the candidates. Many don't feel prepared to choose, and have expressed this in the past many years.

Currently voters hear from candidates at the microphone at the Election Assembly and nothing is written for the GRs to read ahead of time.

\*\*\*\*

- It is to be Brief, only one page per candidate, and to be available on the SCWS website

REASONS FOR THIS STRATEGY \*\*\*\*

- Completed resumes will be available to all voters prior to the day of the election, This follows the KBDM principle of all voters having equal information prior to the vote, and in the candidates' own words.

Voters will have time to review a candidate's information and interest in serving

- Having a Standardized form will provide an equal comparison of candidates, including
  - Al-Anon service beyond the group level, Application of Al-Anon principles
  - other experience and talents, etc.

- Candidates will have time to introduce themselves at the microphone at the Election Assembly and may refer to one's resume.

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## STRATEGY THREE—ELECTRONIC VOTING

### More efficient voting method (electronic voting)

- Cost effective, user-friendly, efficient
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Consistent with Service Manual: written ballot (digitally)

### Reasons for this Strategy

- No-cost service vs. \$3-5,000
- Uses members' own electronic devices
- Immediate results
- Sends e-mail to pre-registered GRs
- **Requires all GRs to be registered in advance**
- Results shows who voted but not how (privacy)
- Electronic voting first used at 2013 World Service Conference (WSC)

Investigate feasibility of electronic voting, which should be:

Cost effective, User friendly, efficient. \*\*\*\* It should provide privacy and confidentiality of one's vote. \*\*\*\*

This is consistent with the Service Manual requiring a written ballot (This is digital writing vs. show of hands) \*\*\*\*

We have found a system to try.

It is a No cost for service, compared to renting a system for \$3-5,000 for one day of voting ) \*\*\*\*

It uses members' own electronic devices. Many have more than one device and can share with those who do not have internet access (phones, tablets, laptops). Voters on the name, which eliminates errors from writing and deciphering the hand-written names) \*\*\*\*

It gives immediate results – we already have seen this with testing in the past month. The total election time could be greatly reduced. \*\*\*\*

It sends an email with a link to the voting website to pre-registered GRs immediately before voting,

Which clearly requires that the GR be registered in advance.

This would be communicated in the best way possible, through DRs, emails, etc.

\*\*\*\*This system will be tested before implementation, and testing already has begun.

• Results will show WHO voted but not HOW they voted \*\*\*\*

• Electronic voting first was used at the 2013 World Service Conference.

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## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Recommendations

- GRs review **Job Descriptions** and **Service Resumes** prior to Election Assembly
- Groups to **register GR and AGR** with records coordinator *including email address* **by first Saturday of Assembly month** (currently May and Nov)
- Try **electronic voting**

Can we live with these new ideas  
and try them for the Nov 2014 Election Assembly?

(WOULD THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS PLEASE COME TO THE FRONT OF THE ROOM?)

- This TF recommends that Group Representatives review job descriptions and Service Resumes prior to the Election Assembly,
- that groups register their Group Representative AND Alternate Group Representative with the records coordinator, including providing an email address, by the first Saturday of the Assembly month (currently May and November),
- and that we try electronic voting as a different and more efficient voting method.

The question becomes, ...

Can we live with these new ideas and try them for the Nov 2014 Election Assembly?

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## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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- **Task Force on Elections and Voting**

- 1 Assembly Voting Member (GR)**

- Ann H**, Group Representative D17

- 5 Past Delegates**

- Willie W**, Panel 37, 1997-1999

- Kay D**, Panel 40, 2000-2002

- Miriam M**, Panel 43, 2003-2005

- Mary M**, Panel 46, 2006-2008

- Sandie E**, Panel 49, 2009-2011

- 1 Officer**

- Elizabeth K** (chair of TF), Minutes Secretary 2012-2014

There were 1 Group Representative, 5 past delegates and 1 officer.

Ann Hobbs is a Group Representative from district 17

All past delegates have been thoroughly trained during their 3-year terms to safeguard the principles of the Al-Anon program.

Consequently, the weekly discussions always were lively, informative and interesting. The time flew by!

The 5 past delegates are:

- Willie W**, Panel 37, 1997-1999

- Kay D**, Panel 40, 2000-2002

- Miriam M**, Panel 43, 2003-2005

- Mary M**, Panel 46, 2006-2008

- Sandie E**, Panel 49, 2009-2011

The officer is ...me! ...the minutes secretary. I am the chair of this Task Force.

I am grateful for this opportunity to be of service.

Thank you.

WE NOW CAN START A DISCUSSION, FACILITATED BY THE ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN.

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## KNOWLEDGE-BASED DECISION MAKING, KBDM

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- 4. What are the **ethical implications** of our choices? (Pros/Cons) *What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others*
- 5. What do we **wish we knew** but don't? *Maybe one of these questions is "What are the unintended consequences of our actions?"*

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## OUR MEMBERSHIP'S NEEDS

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### 1. What do we know about our **membership's needs**, wants and preferences that are relevant to this discussion?

- more efficient election process
- time at Election Assembly for other Area business
- follow Service Manual
- use KBDM when electing SCWS officers, in order to better know and evaluate candidates
- provide everyone who is eligible, qualified and prepared with an equal opportunity to stand
- hear from candidates at microphone at Election Assembly

## OUR MEMBERSHIPS' RESOURCES & STRATEGIC POSITION

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### 2. What do we know about our “capacity” (**resources**) and **strategic position** of our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion?

- Large group of talented members who are eligible:
  - Current DRs
  - Past DRs active at Area level
  - Service experience
  - Knowledge of Legacies, Service Manual, and service structure
  - Professional and technological skills

With 30 districts in Southern California, there are many past and current District Representatives.

THESE are the members who are eligible to serve as Officers.

As DRs, they have service experience, knowledge of the Legacies, Service Manual and the service structure.

Many also have technological and professional skills (from their job and/or volunteering).

## OUR FELLOWSHIP'S CURRENT REALITIES

### 3. What do we know about the **current realities** and evolving dynamics of our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion?

- Voters want to know candidates better, for an informed vote, KBDM
  - Currently GRs hear candidates at microphone for a few minutes but with nothing written for GRs to read ahead of time
  - Each year 1/3 GRs are new and possibly inexperienced with election process
- Candidates / voters need realistic picture of positions to make choices
  - Previous versions of the job descriptions do not reflect all special knowledge/talents needed and realistic time commitment
  - Existing job descriptions vary in information and style: no uniform format
- Members want a more efficient Election Assembly

Can we try new ideas to see if they work for SCWS  
before adopting them formally?

Members expressed concern that they do not know the candidates well enough to choose between them.

"I saw that person at an Assembly meeting or event once."

Time-consuming to collect, unfold, read / decipher, sort, count handwritten ballots (better in script)

Members hear candidates at the microphone for a few minutes each.

One-third of the GRs at the Election Assembly are in their first year as a GR in the current term...

since each year one-third of the districts in SCWS rotate the GRs and DRs.

Voters who are newer and without prior history with the candidates end up voting for the officers even though they have very little information.

Many other Areas rotate all Assembly members (GRs, DRs and Board) at the end of a single, joint 3-year term, and vote on the new officers at the end of that 3-year term (see Service Manual).

Having an opportunity to know the candidates better would lead to a more informed decision.

Likewise, having comprehensive job descriptions would allow voters to choose which candidate they think might best serve the fellowship.

We are reminded in Hope for Today, page 101, that "the God of my understanding wants me for my availability as well as for my abilities. ...God doesn't call the qualified. God qualifies those who are called. Am I listening?"

We do get to learn when we take on a service position, and yet for an officer position, there are more responsibilities.

...When we take a service position, we start with a foundation from our abilities and previous experiences that let us become more and more qualified for other positions. Sometimes we build new skills while in a position, and other times we strengthen skills we already have.

Can we try new ideas first, to see if they work, before adopting them formally?



## ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS / PROS

### 4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? (Pros / Cons)

*What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others.*

#### **PROS:**

- Written Service Resume provides background and equal format for comparison – same questions asked of all candidates
- Comprehensive job description and using standardized resume prior to voting day enables voters to make an informed decision
- Potential candidates understand job expectations
- Resumes submitted prior to Election Assembly
  - Allows resume to be distributed to GRs, posted on website, etc., because some candidates may be unknown to voters
- Officer resumes have not been used prior; many other Areas find beneficial
- "Written vote" (specified in Service Manual) can be electronic
- Electronic voting requires GRs to register prior to the Assembly
- Valuable info available for outreach to meetings without GR or GR not attending Assembly

### 4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? (the Pros and Cons)

*What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others. List pro and con for each possible choice.*

#### **PROS:**

Members would have more info about candidates to evaluate their qualifications for the job.

Using resume and job descriptions follows the spiritual principles of KBDM, all voters have access to the same information so they can make a more informed decision before a choice is made.

potential candidates understand job expectations

members are prepared to vote for most qualified candidates

helps avoid resignation of someone who cannot fulfill all the duties

retains the spirituality of standing spontaneously at Election Assembly

the resume submitted earlier shows one's qualifications, preparedness

the individuals' choice of position is not revealed until the position is announced at the Election Assembly.

## ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS / CONS

### 4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? (Pros / Cons)

*What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others.*

#### **CONS:**

- Some might be resistant to trying something new
- Resume might discourage "standing" of some who are eligible
- Some might not be familiar with legal differences of service structure
  - Although guided by the spiritual principles of the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts, SCWS is a legal, non-profit corporation requiring the prudent management of Area business
  - Al-Anon meetings are informal gatherings of the FELLOWSHIP, do not have legal standing
  - Officers have legal requirements, more responsibilities
- Campaigning could happen
- Some might prioritize technological or professional experiences above experience with Al-Anon principles
- Some new GRs still might not know whom to choose, even with resumes available
- Electronic voting requires GRs to register prior to the Assembly, therefore some new GRs from a first-time registered meeting might not be able to vote.

### 4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? (the Pros and Cons)

*What is meant by "ethical" in this question is how our choice will affect others. List pro and con for each possible choice.*

#### **CONS:**

Some might be resistant to trying something new

Some who are eligible might decide they don't want to submit a resume for all members to see.

Some may not understand that SCWS is the legal, business side of CA(S) vs. the meetings which ARE the fellowship.

Some might start campaigning – which would show others something about that candidate's personal choices.

Some might give higher priority to technological or professional experiences than experience with Al-Anon principles.

Some still could say they don't know how to vote, no matter how much information we give them.

For the electronic voting system we are considering, Email addresses must be inputted prior to the Election Assembly, and so electronic voting necessitates GRs registering prior to the Assembly. There could be a brand new meeting whose GR did not get registered prior to the Election Assembly who would not be able to vote.

## THE UNKNOWN – WISH WE KNEW

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5. What do we **wish we knew** but don't?

*Maybe one of these questions is "What are the unintended consequences of our actions?"*

- Would this process produce better qualified leaders?
- Would this process lead to leadership development?
- Would the needs of members be better represented as a result of these changes?
- Would the GRs embrace this process?
- Would the groups feel greater involvement in the Area and the Election process?
- Would some meetings remain unaware of new deadline until their unregistered GR came to the Election Assembly and so such meetings would not have a vote?
- Will electronic voting work? Will it save time?

5. What do we wish we knew but don't?

*Maybe one of these questions is "What are the unintended consequences of our actions?"*

1. Would this process produce better qualified leaders?

Would it give us candidates with better skill sets, better availability and more knowledge and use of AI-Anon principles?

Would it give us candidates with understanding and agreement with the time commitment/workload?

2. Would this process lead to leadership development?

3. Would the needs of members be better represented as a result of these changes?

4. Would members welcome the accountability that comes with having one's service resume available?

5. Would the GRs embrace the process?

Would they read all of the one-page resumes submitted?

Would they read the job qualifications?

6. Would the groups feel greater involvement in the Election process when they too get to see the qualifications of the candidates ahead of time? Would they feel more a part of the Area.

7. Would some meetings remain unaware of the new advanced registration deadline until their unregistered GR came to the Election Assembly and therefore those meetings not be represented?

8. Will electronic voting work? Will it save time?