

Serving the groups while maintaining Unity

Why present a con?

“The term 'informed group conscience' implies that ***pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.***” The A.A. Group Pamphlet, P-16, pg 29

Concerns with the proposed solution

The Redistricting Committee was charged with researching redistricting solutions. Past inventories suggested the groups needed to be better served, that there were “too many groups for the DCMs to visit” so we need to redistrict.

However, redistricting is just one solution to the problem. Instead of creating a committee to research various solutions to the problem, the committee was charged with finding only redistricting solutions. According to the current proposal, splitting districts without anything to bind them does not create unity.

1. Splitting a district is not the only option

In a BOX 450 (GSO’s newsletter to the fellowship, Holiday Edition, 2006 pg 6.) a past alternate delegate from California shares, “as far as we were concerned, ***splitting a district is a last resort...*** If there are simpler solutions to (a district’s) problems then they are certainly urged to ***try those first before resorting to split.***”

Later, we will share alternate solutions as suggested in The AA Service Manual.

2. More districts does not equal more opportunities to serve

“A.A members that want to split their district... may be under the misconception that dividing their district into *two* is automatically going to boost participation and enthusiasm for service.”
BOX 459, Holiday 2006, pg. 6

3. What about Service Committees?

“First, we would ask: do you have all your service committees filled” past alternate delegate from CA.

The past District Inventories from reflect the current problems of filling district service positions:

- 2013 Inventor “Our turnover in officers and committee people has been high this panel”
- 2015 Inventor “There are missed meetings be some Committee Chairs and we have had trouble filling the empty chairs. Can be empty months.”
- Currently, there is a service position that has been open for months.

What happens to the service committees? It is not defined in the proposal what happens to the Service Committees.

- Option 1: Each district has a full set of service committees. That would mean going from filling seven service positions to filling 35 positions from the same number of AA members.
- Option 2. One set of service committees for the Austin area. But then does that mean GSRs would have to go to their district meeting one Sunday and then the next Sunday go to the Service

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Committee meeting? Would the service committee chair need to visit all five of the district meetings? What happens if one district chooses to have their own service committees separately from the Austin citywide service committee?

4. Financial considerations

“In effect, when you redistrict you are creating two new districts, not one. Among other considerations are financial ones. The same number of groups must now support twice as many officers, plus rent.” BOX 459 Holiday 2006 pg. 6

The same number of groups to support that much more expense for ONE Area Workshop. And we have two Area Workshops per year.

Current Expenses	
3B DCM	\$ 300.00
3C DCM	\$ 300.00
3B Alt DCM	\$ 300.00
3C Alt DCM	\$ 300.00
Archives	\$ 300.00
Corrections	\$ 300.00
Grapevine	\$ 300.00
Literature	\$ 300.00
Newsletter	\$ 300.00
Treatment	\$ 300.00
PICPC	\$ 300.00
\$	
Total for 3B/3C	3,300.00

Expenses after Redistricting	
DCM	\$ 300.00
Alt DCM	\$ 300.00
Archives	\$ 300.00
Corrections	\$ 300.00
Grapevine	\$ 300.00
Literature	\$ 300.00
Newsletter	\$ 300.00
Treatment	\$ 300.00
PICPC	\$ 300.00
Total for 1 District	\$ 2,700.00
Total for 5 Districts	\$ 13,500.00

5. Groups can go into any district they want

District are usually composed of groups within a geographic region. However, those groups can choose which district they want to join.

- Corpus Christi –two districts combined into one district (8D) during panel 62. However, during the same panel, five of the groups decided to restart the old district (8E). Some of the groups meet in the same room but are in two different districts. One of the groups that wanted to be in 8E is actually 70 miles northeast of Corpus. That is the same as a group in San Antonio wanting to be a part of District 3C.
http://aa-swta.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Corpus_Christi_Area_Fall_2013.pdf
- Lake Travis Group is an example of a group that was in District 22 for the longest time. However, they decided a better geographic fit was to join Austin 3B/3C.
- The current proposal puts one group with large financial contributions into each district. However, if one of those large groups leaves the suggested district, this leaves the new district poor.

6. Minority Opinion

AA’s Concept V allows for a minority opinion. Whenever we vote on a topic, after the vote, we allow someone from the minority (the side that didn’t have enough votes to win) an opportunity to say something that may not have been expressed.

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The chairperson asks if anyone, after hearing the minority option, would like to change his or her vote. Many of us involved in this process in AA have seen how the minority opinion can flip a vote.

The procedure for this proposal has no opportunity for a Minority Opinion. The groups are voting by mailing in a ballot. How would someone who is in the minority be able to present a minority opinion to all those who voted? How would we know if anyone wanted to change their vote?

Maybe it isn't broken

- The AA Service Manual page S31 suggests a District in a large metropolitan area can have 90 or more groups.
- When a fellow AA member was asked what he thought of the redistricting issue, he stated, "I didn't know anything was broken! I know about the service pyramid. Aren't the groups supposed to be at the top and calling the shots?"
- Past Delegate from Area 32, District 44. "I could visit 2 groups a week, all year, take two weeks off and still visit 100 groups a year."
We are lucky that our districts have both DCMs and very active Alternate DCMs to help visit the groups.
- The groups who have GSRs attending district and area events are already involved and informed. Therefore, the DCM and alternates should visit the groups that do not have a GSR or are not attending district and area events.

Other possible solutions

Local Committee Member (L.C.M.)

"A large district could divide itself into smaller districts (often called subdistricts or local districts), each electing a local committee member. Depending on area practice, these L.C.M.s may or may not be voting members of the area committee and may or may not hold regular meetings with the G.S.R.s they serve." The A.A. Service Manual page S34

District Committee Member Chairperson (D.C.M.C.)

"A large district in a city or county may hold regular meetings led by a D.C.M.C., who serves as the link between the district and the area. Within this large district, there are as many district sub-divisions as needed to adequately serve the groups. Each of these may be called a subdistrict, local district, or zone. Each is served by a D.C.M., who may hold regular meetings of G.S.R.s. In some areas, these D.C.M.s are voting members of the area committee and assembly; in some, they are not." The A.A. Service Manual page S34

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One order of business at the seminar is choosing the site of the following year's meeting, and this time Akron, Ohio, was chosen.

Intergroups are in the front ranks of Alcoholics Anonymous, the points of contact for most of those who come into the rooms. As Bill W. remarked, "they make A.A. tick" (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 133).

■ Looking at Redistricting Options

Communication among groups can break down when their number in a district reaches a point where the district committee member—the D.C.M.—is unable to stay in touch with them all.

A district may deal with this by pursuing one form or another of redistricting, such as splitting itself into two or more parts, each with its own D.C.M. **Alternatively, a district might create subdistricts. The choice is up to the local A.A. members; what works for some districts may not work for others.**

Area 6, California Northern Coastal, to cite one example of how an area approached redistricting, **has 22 districts that have been divided into about 130 subdistricts. Each of these subdistricts elects a local committee member (L.C.M.).**

Depending on area practice, L.C.M.s may or may not be voting members of the area committee and may or may not hold regular meetings with the G.S.R.s in their subdistricts.

Each area goes about redistricting in its own way. One example is from North Florida, which agreed on the following at an area conference in 1995: **"When a district reaches 20 or more groups, it may elect local committee members for each combination of 10 groups.** The L.C.M. will function as an assistant to the D.C.M. and will not have a vote at the assembly."

As spelled out in *The A.A. Service Manual*, "Good communication and cooperation among groups, districts, and areas is important when redistricting or other changes in district structure are undertaken. There are many variations, but the goal is the same: to take care of expansion at the district level." (p. S31)

According to Butch W., who served as alternate delegate for California Northern Coastal in 2003 and 2004, **"as far as we were concerned, splitting a district is a last resort. In effect, when you redistrict, you are creating two new districts, not one. Among other considerations are financial ones. The same number of groups must now support twice as many officers, plus rent. Also, too many districts can make for unwieldy area assembly meetings."**

During the time he did service in Area 6, members from a number of districts came forward at area assemblies to propose dividing up their districts.

"When someone from a district called for splitting that district, we did not want to talk them out of it, but we would ask a few questions. First we would ask: **do you have all your service positions filled?** We'd also ask what percentage of their groups have active G.S.R.s and how splitting the district would improve that? Finally, we would ask them what the district has done to encourage participation, such as putting out a newsletter or organizing a day-long A.A. event," says Butch.

The point of posing these questions, he says, was to get the A.A. members in the district to consider their situations. **A.A. members that want to split their district, he says, may be under the misconception that dividing their district into two is automatically going to boost participation and enthusiasm for service.** Again, though, the decision is up to the district itself, says Butch.

The same holds true in Area 59, Eastern Pennsylvania. The delegate there, Gary L., says, "the Area does not approve or disapprove district splits; we view it as a local matter. We do, however, counsel that it not be done impulsively and we strongly urge them to include at least the area officers and perhaps even the area committee in their discussions, not with an eye toward talking them out of it, but simply to give them a broader range of experience to draw upon. **If there are simpler solutions to their problems then they are certainly urged to try those first before resorting to a split."**

Nevertheless, his area was actively redistricting in the 1980s and into the 1990s. As Gary reports, "Area 59 has experienced district splits in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, and 1998. In three of those years, there were at least two separate splits. About 60% of the time it was one district splitting into two, and about 40% of the time it was one district splitting into three. We have gone from 23 districts in 1980 to 47 districts currently."

As Gary points out, "Eastern Pennsylvania is a pretty big chunk of land—at least relative to our neighbors in the Northeast Region. That may have been the motivation for many of the splits."

In 2004, "we had our most recent dealing with the issue—an attempted split that was ultimately voted down by the district," says Gary.

■ Update for A.A. Directories

Starting in January 2006 a reminder will be mailed to all delegates, area chairs and area registrars advising them that it is time for the annual Group Updates to the A.A. Directories. Our Area Download Application (MS Access) will be available for the area registrars to bring their area records up-to-date. Deadline for all information in May 1, 2006.