



Al-Anon/**Alateen** Family Groups
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WORLD SERVICE

Area World Service Committee
August 17, 2024
Officers Presentation

Area World Service Committee Meetings

The primary function of the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) is to plan for the general improvement of both the Assembly and the groups. Voting members of this committee are usually the officers of the Assembly, the DRs, Coordinators of services (such as Alateen, Archives, Public Outreach [Public Information, Cooperating with the Professional Community, and Institutions], Literature, Group Records, *The Forum*, or Newsletter) and liaison members from any Information Services (Intergroups). The chairman of Al-Anon activities at an A.A. area convention or chairman of Area Al-Anon and Alateen conventions should also participate in AWSC meetings.

~~Page 159 of the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* – World Service Handbook Section

Speaker Notes: As we begin, we wanted to present the reasoning behind the AWSC, from the World Service Handbook section of the Service Manual [The Speaker Notes—if we used them during the AWSC presentation—will be at the bottom of each slide, in green font.]

Definition of Terms

- Facts: an event or thing known to have happened or existed; a truth verifiable from experience or observation.
- Experience: the process of doing and seeing things and of having things happen to you; encounter or undergo (an event or occurrence).
- Opinions: a view or judgment formed about something not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.
- Hearsay: information received from other people that one cannot adequately substantiate; the report of another person's words.
- Gossip: casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.

The Facts

Authority and Service in SCWS AI-Anon



The Second Tradition:

For our group purpose there is but one authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.

The Group Representatives express the will of our Higher Power through the group conscience and their votes. The ultimate authority is the GR's vote at the Assembly. Subordinate to that is the group conscience of the AWSC members, then the Board, then the Officers. For Group purposes, no individual AI-Anon member's "right of decision" supersedes any group conscience. We hope and trust that that is a fact that we all agree with, as that is the foundation of our program.

Conflicts Within the Legacies?

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.

General Warranty #3: that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible by unanimity.

Concept 3: The right of decision makes effective leadership possible.

Concept 10: Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.

From the beginning of this panel, the Chair and the other Officers had fundamental differences about group conscience votes and the “right of decision.” These conflicts were based on principles, not personalities. Based on our understanding of Tradition Two and General Warranty #3, the Officers make decisions **after** reasoning things out with one another. Each of us asks questions, makes comments, looks through the literature for guidance, etc. We do not always agree! We prefer to act after establishing unanimity, but sometimes we can’t. In all of those cases, once the vote is taken, we honor that vote as an expression of our Higher Power’s will for us.

Group Conscience and Service

“Ultimately, our leaders are subject to the will of the many, the will of the group. Their job is to serve, not to dominate, to carry out the decisions made by the group, not to make those decisions themselves.” (*How Al-Anon Works*, p. 111)

The conflict between the group conscience vote and the Chair’s “right of decision” occurred around several issues.

History of Group Consciences, 2024

Date	Group	Topic
1/6/2024	Officers	Officers unanimously voted not to affirm the Area Interim Treasurer. (slides 9-15)
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place updated Bylaws on the Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place hybrid Assemblies on Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
March/April	Assembly	Assembly vote of 1994 regarding expenditures
5/18/2024	Assembly	Election of two new Officers

This is a timeline of the conflicts between several group conscience votes and the former Chair's "right of decision".

Timeline of Officer Votes (1)

- December 27, 2023: Held an ad hoc Officer's meeting to discuss Interim Treasurer position.
- Two things happened at that meeting:
 - The Chair surprised her fellow Officers by inviting Renee M. as the Interim Alternate Delegate with no prior notice or discussion.
 - Thoroughly discussed whether or not to appoint the candidate the Chair wanted to appoint as Interim Treasurer.
 - **Voted:** 2 Nay, 1 Yay, 1 Abstain (The Immediate Past Delegate/IPB had no vote).

Timeline of Officer Votes (2)

- Officers **approved** appointment of Renee M. as Interim Alternate Delegate.
- Officers discussed and **approved** appointment of all other Coordinators.

The Officers have been accused of being obstructionist and unwilling to work with the Chair. We successfully worked together on the appointment of the Interim Alternate Delegate and the other Coordinators early in January.

Timeline of Officer Votes (3)

- January 6, 2024: Chair surprised her fellow Officers by inviting a member to the Officer's Meeting with no prior notice or discussion.
- After considerable discussion, the Officers **voted** not to affirm the candidate as the Interim Treasurer—a binding vote.
3 Nay, 1 Abstain (IPB had no vote.)
 - The two reasons the Officers voted in this way are outlined in the Minutes from May 18, 2024 in the *Bulletin*.

The Chair invited the candidate to speak to the Officers, using Concept Five: “The right of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.” We asked questions of the candidate and had a conversation with her about the past and her current thoughts about those events in the past. After she left, we thoroughly discussed the issue and voted. The vote was 3 against (the IPB had no vote but would also have voted “no” if he did) and 1 abstention.

Timeline of Officer Votes (4)

- At that January 6 meeting, the Officers specifically discussed **respecting the vote** of our group.
- Officers **unanimously voted** that in the future, no one of the Officers would make a unilateral decision that affected the Officers without coming to the group first and discussing it.

Because this was the second time that the Officers had been “surprised” by someone being invited to our meeting without prior notice, we talked frankly with one another about that pattern. Our discussion included requesting prior notification of anyone being invited to our meetings *and* emphasized that we would honor our group conscience votes, even if we disagreed with them. We raised our hands and pledged that we would not surprise one another with actions that affected the group but would come to the group prior to taking any such action.

Timeline of Officer Votes (5)

- At our first Board meeting on January 13, the Chair **honored the group conscience** and did not introduce the candidate as the Interim Treasurer.
- January 18 – The Chair **honored the group conscience** when the Officers met to discuss a qualified candidate for the position.

It appeared to the Officers that we were all in agreement about moving on from the first candidate.

Timeline of Officer Votes (6)

- January 31 – the Officers received an email from the Chair: “I have appointed the candidate as our Interim Treasurer.”
 - Our “Agent” (W.W., who fills out the CA Statement of Information) reported to the Officers that he asked the Chair if she had appointed a new Interim Treasurer yet. She said yes. Based on that information, he filled out that Statement.
 - Chair wrote a letter to the bank stating that this member was the Treasurer.
 - This member remained on the bank accounts until after the May 18 Assembly.

The Officers were “blindsided” by this email announcing that the Chair had appointed to the Interim Treasurer position the candidate that we had all voted against affirming on January 6. We had taken a vote—and agreed to abide by that vote—and had agreed that if anyone had a problem with a vote, they would come back to the group prior to taking an action that would affect the group.

Timeline of Officer Votes (7)

- Because of the **vote** at our Officer's meeting, the Officers could have removed the candidate from the accounts and chose not to, in order not to cause public controversy.

We have been accused by a DR of "falsifying" various Minutes or documents. In point of fact, the Officers took a binding vote on January 6 that did **not** affirm the candidate—and the Chair subsequently did not communicate those facts to our "Agent" or to the bank.

History of Group Consciences, 2024

Date	Group	Topic
1/6/2024	Officers	Officers unanimously voted not to affirm the Area Interim Treasurer.
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place updated Bylaws on the Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote (slide 17)
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place hybrid Assemblies on Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote (slide 17)
March/April	Assembly	Assembly vote of 1994 regarding expenditures
5/18/2024	Assembly	Election of two new Officers

AWSC Group Conscience Votes not Honored by the Chairperson

- February 17, 2024 Committee meeting—**voted** to poll GRs on future hybrid/virtual Assembly at the May Assembly.
- Committee voted to discuss and **vote** on the updated Bylaws at the May Assembly.
- The Chairperson did not place either item on the Assembly Agenda
 - After considerable discussion, the Assembly **voted** to put the Bylaws update vote on the Agenda.

The right of decision does not give a Chair the authority to ignore the vote of a body (like the Committee) and not include an item on the Agenda—if that body has voted for it to be included. The “right of decision” does give a Chair permission to place items on an Agenda in any way he or she chooses. Challenging the absence of an item on an Agenda is not disrespectful, nor is it double-headed management. Asking questions of one another is also not double-headed management—it is part of gathering information and reasoning things out with one another.

History of Group Consciences, 2024

Date	Group	Topic
1/6/2024	Officers	Officers unanimously voted not to affirm the Area Interim Treasurer.
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place updated Bylaws on the Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place hybrid Assemblies on Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
March/April	Assembly	Several expenditures did not conform to Assembly motion from 1994 (slide 19)
5/18/2024	Assembly	Election of two new Officers

Financial Irregularities

- *Per a motion from 1994, any Area expenditures between \$500 and \$2,000 must be approved by the Board of Directors/Officers.*
- On March 7, the Chair filled out a “cash receipt” to withdraw \$1,100 from the SCWS checking account without discussing this with the Directors/Officers. When the Officers asked/emailed her about this transaction, they received no response for 2 months.
- Chair approved--with no documentation--over \$1,200 of charges for the AFG Convention and the San Diego Roundup for another SCWS Board member and herself. The past practice of the Area is not to reimburse for hotel/meals convention expenses.

The Area reimburses mileage and registration for Alateen Coordinators who are hosting Alateen Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) certifications or recertifications. No Alateen Coordinator in the past has been reimbursed for meals or for staying overnight at the hotel at the AFG Convention.

History of Group Consciences, 2024

Date	Group	Topic
1/6/2024	Officers	Officers unanimously voted not to affirm the Area Interim Treasurer.
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place updated Bylaws on the Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
2/17/2024	AWSC	Voted to – place hybrid Assemblies on Assembly Meeting Agenda for vote
March/April	Assembly	Assembly vote of 1994 regarding expenditures
5/18/2024	Assembly	Election of two new Officers (slides 21-28)

Assembly Group Consciences not Honored by the Chairperson

- Assembly **voted** Sean N.-G. as Area Alternate Delegate.
- Assembly **voted** Vicki V. as Area Treasurer.
 - Area Chairperson did not contact either the newly elected Alternate Delegate or Treasurer for more than 4 weeks.
- The Area's Immediate Past Delegate stepped in as Interim Chairperson to perform **all** the duties of the Chairperson.

The conflicts outlined on the previous slides about group conscience votes and the right of decision are *not* the reason why the former Chair is no longer the Chair.

SCWS Chairperson Job Description

REALISTIC TIME COMMITMENT OF THIS POSITION –
Minimum of 15-20 hours per week on preparation and follow up, responding to large volume of emails and phone calls, travel to conflict resolution and other meetings, and to make presentations at District, Intergroup and Area meetings.

Before standing for an Officer position, we are asked to read the Job Descriptions so that we know what is involved before stepping into it.

SCWS Officer Agreement (1)

- Signed by all Officers (also by all Coordinators)
- Intended to ensure that Officer functions are completed in a timely manner
- Several tasks we commit to:
 - Check emails regularly, at least every two days and responds accordingly.
 - Participate fully and promptly in any email discussions, conference calls or assignments.

In addition to having read and understood the Job Descriptions, we sign an agreement that outlines how we work with one another and with our Coordinators.

SCWS Chairperson Agreement (2)

1. Be available to discuss any situations that may prevent your participation in meetings or the completion of responsibilities, and to provide support to resolve issues, when possible.
2. Keep the SCWS Officers informed of any matters of non-participation.

There have been many instances in the past when Officers have had to step back from their positions for short periods—and they have informed the Chair or, in the case of the Chair, the other Officers regarding the circumstances and the length of time they were unavailable to attend to Area business.

Timeline of Events (1)

- The Area Chairperson stopped performing her duties on May 18th.
- From May 18 through June 15, the Officers performed all of their own duties and all of the duties of the Chair.
- The Officers emailed the Chair frequently and ***received no response.***
- Two Officers called and texted the Chair during these 4 weeks and ***received no response.***

After two weeks of no contact from our Chair, we were in a quandary. Tim reached out with a phone call and text on June 6: “Dear Micheila, would you like to talk by phone sometime soon? I don’t have any particular agenda other than staying in touch. Thanks.” He received no response. On June 9th, Sean reached out: Hey there. It’s Sean. I was just trying to connect with you. Haven’t heard anything from you since the assembly. I called and left a message. Have a good day [received response from Micheila on Monday, June 17 @ 9:17am]

Timeline of Events (2)

- During those four weeks, the Officers:
 - Followed up on the Assembly's instruction to engage in conflict resolution
 - Organized the orientation of the incoming Alternate Delegate –
 - Transferred email address, added to bank account, worked with former Interim AD to exchange information, provided and followed up with Area “agreement”
 - Organized the orientation of the incoming Treasurer
 - Transferred email address, added to bank account, facilitated transfer of all equipment from previous Treasurer, coordinated training with previous Treasurer, changed California Statement of Information, coordinated purchase of new printer/scanner, discussed and voted on software purchases, updated information with mail center
 - Updated banking access for all accounts—in-person visits to the bank, updating signature cards, etc.
 - Worked with our Representative to update Secretary of State form
 - Reviewed and edited Assembly Minutes
 - Composed, posted and reviewed the results of the Survey for the May Assembly
 - Reviewed and approved posting of the *Bulletin*

The Chairperson's email address received over 300 emails from May 18 through June 15 that she didn't open or read. We/Officers sent over 50 emails to the Chair during that period addressing Area business items.

Timeline of Events (3)

- After performing the Area Chairperson's job for four weeks, the Area Officers sent an email requesting a response from the Chairperson within 24 hours.
- The Officers explained that the Chairperson's lack of response would be interpreted as her resignation.
- The Officers asked her to provide any extenuating circumstances that would affect this decision to accept her resignation.
- Having received ***no response*** from the Chair within 24 hours, the Officers accepted her tacit resignation and acted accordingly.

The process of notifying an officer of non-fulfillment of duties with a deadline to respond, followed by confirmation of termination, is accepted practice both legally and traditionally. If someone leaves the program, e.g., doesn't answer emails or respond to communications, it is not possible for the Assembly or the legal entity to wait for a resignation. We cannot presume to know what someone else is thinking. We have to respond to their actions or inactions.

To Recapitulate

From May 18 through June 15, we sent dozens of emails to the Chair about many topics (including conflict resolution) ***and received no response.***

Two of the Officers called, left voicemail messages, and texted asking the Chair to reach out, ***and received no response.***

After doing our jobs and the job of the Chair for 4 weeks, we addressed the Chair's absence and asked her to clarify her position. We ***received no response*** within the 24-hour time frame.

Based on the facts at hand, the Officers concluded that the Chair had withdrawn from her position.

We did not remove the Chair. For 4 weeks—we received not one call, text, email. She removed herself.

Principles Above Personalities



The Second Tradition:

For our group purpose there is but one authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.

We either agree that the group conscience is the final authority or we don't. We follow that group conscience and we do the job that we committed to do. And if we can't do the job (temporarily or permanently)—or choose not to—then we let others know in a timely manner.

Summary

- The Area Chairperson stopped performing her job for more than four weeks after the May Assembly.
- The Area Chairperson disregarded group consciences of the Officers, the AWSC, and the Assembly.
- The Immediate Past Delegate stepped into the position of Interim Area Chairperson to ensure Area Business was performed in a timely fashion.

Questions and Comments

- Please ask questions that elicit further information.
- Please limit your comments to events that you have directly experienced.
- Please avoid disseminating gossip and/or hearsay.
- Please assume good will: “All Al-Anon discussions should be constructive, helpful, loving, and understanding.”

(2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, p. 20)