

Template for Submission of Proposed Agenda Items For the 75th General Service Conference (2025)

Deadline for Submission: September 30, 2024

1. Submit a clear and concisely worded motion.

That an ad hoc committee be created with members to include, but not be limited to, the Trustee-at-Large/United States, the Trustee-at-Large/Canada, and the A.A.W.S. staff member assigned to the International Desk at the General Service Office, to develop a plan for increasing international participation, coordination, communication, and input by A.A. members, groups, and service structures outside of the United States and Canada in decisions which affect Alcoholics Anonymous and its members worldwide. The ad hoc committee will have a goal of bringing a status report to the trustees' International Committee by January 2026 and a final report with recommendations for implementation to the 76th General Service Conference.

2. What problem does this proposed item address?

Article Twelve of our Conference Charter, also referred to as Warranty Six of Concept XII, concludes with the declaration that "the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit," yet the U.S./Canada General Service Conference structure currently makes major decisions concerning policy, literature, and finance that affect global A.A. while an estimated 25 percent of the nearly two million A.A. members around the world have absolutely no say in those decisions. On its very face, the existing decision-making process is the antithesis of democracy in action, spirit, and every other sense of the word. The voices of all A.A. members around the world should be heard and considered.

3. What level of group conscience, if any, discussed the proposed agenda item?

In 2023, Areas 29 (Maryland) and 13 (District of Columbia) submitted proposed agenda items (PAI) on a related topic that resulted in a one-page reply from the secretary of the Trustees' International Committee declining to consider the proposal on the basis that it was beyond the scope of the purpose for the World Service Meeting. The current PAI seeks a forum through which improvements to the current decision-making process might be suggested. This PAI was submitted to the Maryland Area's Conference Agenda Review Committee #1 for Maryland's Eastern Shore (CARC-1) on July 27, 2024. The PAI was accepted by the CARC-1 secretary, but due to time limitations, no discussion ensued. The PAI was re-submitted on July 31, 2024 to CARC-3 for Northeast Maryland, which discussed the proposal and voted unanimously to forward the PAI to the Area 29 Assembly on August 17, 2024 so the Assembly can consider whether to ask our Area 29 Delegate to submit the PAI to the 2025 Conference Coordinator.

4. Provide background information that describes and supports the reasoning for the proposal. List background material(s) included with the proposal:

Original Conference Charter – 1955 (North American Section)

Current Conference Charter (United States and Canada)

Resolution Authorizing the General Service Conference

Bylaws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

FM-4, Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

BM-31, Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.

BM-31, The A.A. Service Manual, 2021-2023 Edition

F-150, Final Report, A.A. 25th World Service Meeting, Durban, South Africa, October 7-11, 2018

SMF-132, Estimated Worldwide A.A. Individual and Group Membership

Letter of November 3, 2023, from Irene D., Secretary, Trustees' International Committee, to Lynette D., Area 13 Delegate

B-2, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

5. The rationale supporting this Proposed Agenda Item is stated most simply in the Final Report of A.A.'s 25th World Service Meeting held in Durban, South Africa in 2018, where on page 66, in the Workshop III, Leadership in A.A., (section 2, Serving vs. Governing, subsection a. Respecting the group conscience), the report states: "Every A.A. member must be heard because all members have something of value to contribute." That idea is the core value of democracy, embracing the principles of equality, of unity, of our mutual recovery, and of our common humanity. On page C58 of A.A. co-founder Bill W.'s essays on the Twelve Concepts, speaking on Warranty Six, he says: "... we here specially enjoin our General Service Conference to abstain completely from any and all acts of authoritative government which could in any wise curtail A.A.'s freedom under God. The maintenance of these freedoms in our Conference is a great and practical guarantee that the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit."

In 2021, the last year that statistics were released by A.A. World Services, there were an estimated 1,967,613 active members of A.A. worldwide, down from an estimated 2,138,201 members in 2020. Approximately 75 percent of those members reside in the United States and Canada. That means that an estimated 491,903 active members of Alcoholics Anonymous who live outside of the United States and Canada have absolutely no voice, no vote, and no say in the "collective group conscience" decisions rendered by the U.S./Canada General Service Conference. Based on my personal observations during the past four years of the rapid growth of online A.A. in other countries around the world, I would be remiss if I did not assert that the number of disenfranchised members abroad far exceeds that total. A.A. might have come of age in North America back in the 1950s, but it has come of age around the rest of the globe since then and the voices of all A.A. members worldwide need to be considered in matters of policy, literature, and finance which affect A.A. around the globe.

Since the Trustees' International Committee decided to take no action on last year's PAI, we have re-worded our proposal to permit suggestions to be made, alternatives to be discussed, and recommendations to be proposed within the scope of the U.S./Canada General Service Conference structure so that we can begin to move toward a true democratic decision-making process that involves all A.A. members worldwide.

6. What are the intended/expected outcomes if this proposed item is approved?

Alcoholics Anonymous will become a worldwide democratic fellowship in actual practice rather than only in theory.

7. Provide a primary contact for the submission.

Don Bridges, Panel 68 Area 29 (Maryland) Past Delegate, 4600 Roland Avenue #2B, Baltimore, Maryland 21210 U.S.A., cell phone +1 (703) 994-1521, email bigbookstudent@gmail.com.

8. Final Comments

In the closing paragraph of his essay on Concept I, A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote, "... we see in our Fellowship a spiritualized society characterized by enough enlightenment, enough responsibility and enough love of man and of God to ensure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions (12 Concepts, p. C5)." The time for us to act on this view and bring our worldwide service structure into alignment with the ideals expressed by our co-founder back in 1962, over 70 years ago, is long overdue. Global A.A. has come of age. It is time for our trusted servants in North America to treat our fellow members around the world as equal partners in our common efforts, not as second-class inferiors. Failure to implement this much-needed change could destroy the unity that A.A. still manages to enjoy despite the structural shortcomings of our Fellowship. The same principles apply here as when Bill W. wrote about Step 6 on page 69 of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: "Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's will for us."