

2024 Conference Committee on Report and Charter

ITEM C: Discuss the reporting of Simple Majority Items.

Background notes:

Excerpts from the January 27, 2024 meeting:

“The committee thoughtfully discussed concerns raised by Conference members and A.A. members about the section in the Final Conference Report, “Recommendations Passed by Simple Majority.” The committee noted that this section comes from a 1986 Report and Charter Advisory Action:

“If a committee recommendation does not receive the two-thirds vote required to become a Conference Advisory Action, but has a majority of votes, it automatically becomes a suggestion and will be duly noted in the Conference Report.”

“The committee discussed the ambiguity of the Conference Group Conscience when a recommendation that fails by a Simple Majority is automatically forwarded to a Trustees’ Committee as a consideration and felt that this could unintentionally foster disunity within the Fellowship. The committee noted how the Final Conference Report is used to clearly communicate the Group Conscience from the General Service Conference, and raised concerns that the Simple Majority section could lead to misunderstandings and confusion.”

“The committee felt that sentiment within the Fellowship may have shifted since the 1986 Advisory Action and agreed to forward a request to the 2024 Conference Committee on Report and Charter to discuss if the practice of communicating items that failed to achieve substantial unanimity as suggestions is still desirable, and if the Conference would like to continue the reporting of these items separately from other items that did not carry from a General Service Conference.”

“The staff secretary will include additional sharing from the committee as background to aid a discussion about this topic.”

Secretary’s Notes:

The idea of a simple majority vote of the Conference being a strong suggestion to the General Service Board does not appear in the Conference Charter. Bill references this idea in Concept V saying “More often they [the GSB] go along with a simple majority of

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the Delegates, especially when prompt action on less critical matters is clearly needed. But the choice is always theirs whether to veto a simple majority or to act with it. Here again is a recognition of the constructive value of a trusted minority.” (The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts, p. 22)

This idea is reiterated in two places in the Service Manual, in the introduction “A.A.’s Legacy of Service” (p. 11), in the section on the General Service Conference (p. 57). The idea is also expressed in the introduction to the Conference Charter in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (p. 295).

We do not have history of whether or how this was implemented before 1986.

There is limited information about how the General Service Board handled these “strong suggestions.”

The first appearances of this situation were two “strong suggestions” recorded in the 1989 Final Conference Report. The last was recorded in 1995. It has not been a practice for many years to record the count on each vote at the General Service Conference.

In the 2022 Final Report a note was included below the section “Recommendations Passed by Simple Majority that stated: “There were no recommendations passed on a simple majority vote that did not receive two-thirds vote necessary to become a Conference Advisory Action.”

Background:

1. Communication – Conference Members and A.A. members
2. Additional Sharing from trustees’ General Service Conference Committee

Memo

To: 2024 Conference Committee on Report and Charter

From: 2023-2024 Trustees' General Service Conference Committee

Re: Additional Sharing on the reporting of Simple Majority Items

Background Notes:

At their January 27, 2024 meeting, the chair of the trustees' General Service Conference Committee welcomed all in attendance with a special welcome to Conference committee delegate chairs and the 2024 Conference Committee on Agenda chair: Rebecca H. The chair expressed gratitude to be joined by JoAnn McC., chair 2024 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions; Mary E., chair 2024 Conference Committee on Report and Charter; and Mary A., Conference Delegate chair.

The committee asked the staff secretary to forward the following additional sharing on the topic of Simple Majority, and invited the delegate committee chairs to participate:

Additional Sharing:

- On page 48 of the 2023 Final Report it lists three sections.
 - Recommendations Passed by Simple Majority
 - Recommendations Not Resulting in Conference Action
 - Floor Actions Not Resulting in Conference Advisory Actions.
- Questions and concerns have been received that using the wording “**passed**” in conjunction with a recommendation that did not pass but received a simple majority may cause confusion. Particularly if this section has no editor’s note to clarify.
- There is also concern as to whether the Group Conscience as reflected in an Advisory Action resulting from substantial unanimity can in turn be fully respected if simple majority items are noted distinctly in the Final Report.

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- The Conference Report communicates the Group Conscience from the General Service Conference.
- Does the 1986 Advisory Action still have a place? What is the intention of an item that did not pass but received simple majority being posed to the Board as a suggestion, suggest for the Board to do with that item? Does this bypass the Conference process? If the General Service Board decides to take action or not take action on an item that did not pass, what would be the parameters on delegated authority?
- Is it really a suggestion?
- The recommendation actually failed by a Simple Majority.
- What category does this fall into? It is not really the same sense as a Committee Consideration or should it be treated as a Conference consideration to the Board?
- The wording, “Strong suggestion” may contradict the group conscience of the Conference and defeat the discussion on the floor.
- A first step might be for clearer language in the Final Report. A second step might be to look at this overall topic from a policy level.

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Correspondence from GSB member to TGSCC Chair and committee

Caorlyn W. – Chair of Trustees Conference Committee
General Service Board

October 7, 2023

Dear Carolyn and Member of the Trustees Conference Committee,

One of the delegates from the West Central Region raised a question about the Final Conference Report: Why do we have a category called “Recommendations Passed by Simple Majority”? (see Table of Contents and page 48 of the 2023 Final Report) That title seems misleading because the consideration did not “pass”.

Will you please consider a different description for reporting the Committee Consideration(s) that failed to pass by substantial unanimity, but did gain a simple majority of the votes?

Thank you in advance for your time to consider this issue.

Sincerely,

Kerry Meyer – Class A Trustee

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Correspondence from Conference Committee on Agenda Chair to TGSCC Chair

On Sat, Oct 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM

Hello Trustees Committee on Conference. Please see below for some feedback, consistent with what else I have heard from the fellowship. Since this came from the delegate chair of our corresponding conference committee (agenda) I thought I would pass this on to help inform our discussion today.

-----Original Message-----

From: Delegate 73 <delegate73@eamo.org>

Sent: Friday, October 27, 2023 9:04 PM

Subject: Final conference report (simple majority)

Carolyn,

I am assuming you are already at Board weekend and this is probably too late but just in case....

We talked about the final conference report listing agenda items that passed with simple majority and the confusion it causes. It is very confusing even as a delegate. The first reaction was that those items were passed even though they did not pass by substantial unanimity at the conference. It felt like the vote we held at the beginning of the conference did not mean anything which was very disappointing. It also felt like the work we did on these items wasn't important since it showed up in the final report that they passed. I feel like I didn't get a clear answer about this either until I talked to you about it, thank you for that! I am assuming a member that actually reads the final report would automatically think that item passed. I hope in the future this can be more clear or not included in the final report at all.

Have a great Board weekend! I look forward to hearing about it when we meet.

In love and service,

Becca H.

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