



WRITING A MOTION TO THE WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

A motion to the S-Anon World Service Conference (WSC) is almost always a call to action, specifically, an action to be taken or directed by the WSC, the Board of Trustees (BOT), or the World Service Office (WSO). This document contains both general and specific suggestions to help members present their ideas in a motion that clearly states the action being proposed and the reasons the motion maker believes the action will benefit the S-Anon Fellowship. It also discusses each section of the motion and includes a sample motion with additional notes to highlight the features discussed in the text. The Motion Form is available for downloading on the S-Anon website at: www.sanon.org/wsc.html#Q4.

OBJECTIVE

This document aims to help members write motions that are concise and stated precisely enough that local S-Anon group members unfamiliar with the issues can consider them productively and participate in relevant discussion without additional clarification. This document focuses only on the “how to” of writing a motion. It does not discuss the subject matter of motions, nor does it discuss how motions are submitted or processed after they are received. For additional information on how motions are submitted and processed, please refer to the *S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual (SSSM)*, p. 59-74, available for purchase and download from the Online Store at www.sanon.org.

TIMING

Members can start writing as soon as they have an idea for a motion they want the WSC to consider. As discussed in the *SSSM*, deadlines must be established to allow time for local S-Anon groups to provide input to the Area Delegates. The deadline for submitting motions, usually around February 1, is publicized through the Area Delegates and is included in the “WSO Update” emailed to all groups three times a year.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

In general, the motion *should* follow the approved specific format and should be geared to the readers. The motion should not exceed two (2) pages.

Format: The motion format is structured to allow readers to readily discover the main idea, the supporting ideas, and the reasons the motion maker believes this motion

will benefit *the S-Anon fellowship as a whole. This is the format that must be used.* A motion using any other format is “out of order” and will not be considered.

Audience: A motion writer must be aware of the audience with every sentence written. As mentioned above, the primary audience is *not* WSC members; rather, it is local S-Anon group members. Ideally, the motion should stand alone, without explanation or clarification by the Area Delegates. Experience shows that a motion receives more focused, thoughtful consideration when only the most relevant, needed information is presented.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EACH SECTION OF THE MOTION

A. STATE THE MOTION

Because a motion is usually a call to action, strive to make the statement concise and specific. Be aware that unclear wording may cause a motion to be confusing or misunderstood. Ideally, the motion is absolutely clear about what action is being suggested. Answer the question, “*What action do you want the WSC to take?*” Use terminology such as, “Move that the WSC ...[fill in action to be taken].” In this section, do not discuss “how” it should be done or “why” it should be done. If the motion suggests that several actions be taken, break it into sections, so that each section can be voted on separately. (See Attachment A, Sample Motion.) Lack of clarity does not prevent the distribution of the motion to WSC members; however, experience shows it can limit productive WSC consideration of the motion.

B. BACKGROUND AND INTENT

In this section, briefly state the circumstances that led to the writing of the motion, and *why* you are bringing this motion to the WSC now. You could summarize: 1) the history and current status of the issue; 2) the challenges that are created for the fellowship with this issue unresolved; and 3) how this motion, if passed, would contribute to the solution.

C. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

In Section C, list the most relevant Traditions and/or Concepts and how each one supports the passage of the motion. Choose the principles that *most directly*, in your opinion, support the motion. Although you may believe that many of the Traditions and Concepts are applicable, be aware that choosing more than three or four main principles decreases the likelihood that S-Anon members in

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local groups will take the time to carefully read the entire motion. Experience shows that too much information tends to overwhelm, rather than convince. Out of respect for the limited time local S-Anon group members may have to devote to study the motions, present your ideas as concisely as possible.

D. FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Board of Trustees (BOT) Finance Committee completes this section after the motion has been submitted to the WSC Committee.

E. ARGUMENTS PRO

This section *summarizes* the “Intent” and “Supporting Principles” sections, so it is unnecessary to repeat material that has been provided in those previous sections. Let your argument(s) *for* the motion be guided by awareness that local group members may not have ready access to their Area Delegate to provide clarification. It is helpful to choose the arguments that will be the most understandable by the most members.

F. ARGUMENTS CON

Motion makers do not have to provide a “Con” argument, but if the motion maker does not provide at least one “Con” argument, other members will be asked to provide one or more arguments against the motion before it comes to the WSC. This is done in the spirit of presenting all sides of a question so local groups can conduct an *informed* group conscience. Also, it may be helpful to consider a viewpoint that would be opposed to your motion in order to clarify your thinking about which supporting principles will be most persuasive in the “Pro” section.

G. DOCUMENTATION

If your motion passes, where will the approved decision be recorded? All decisions of the WSC are documented in the Minutes of the WSC and are added to the Decision Database maintained by the World Service Office. Some motions do not require additional documentation (See Attachment A, Sample Motion), but some do. Ask yourself, would any guiding documents, such as the *WSC Charter* or the *S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual* require a change to align with the results of the vote? Would the S-Anon Website need to change? If you do not know how to fill in this section, the WSC Committee will do so.

H. SUBMISSION DETAILS

This information is required so the WSC Committee can contact the motion maker directly for clarification and revision, if necessary. Anonymous motions are “out of order.” Since only a WSC member (Area Delegate, Trustee, or Executive Director) may submit a motion, the “Submitter” does not necessarily know the Motion Maker’s intent and cannot revise the motion for the Motion Maker.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Members of the WSC Committee can provide assistance while you are writing your motion. They can answer questions, clarify the requirements, and review your motion to determine whether your motion is “in order,” but they may not actually write your motion for you. Contact the WSC Committee through the WSO or email: wscchair@gmail.com.

REFERENCES

S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual, 2007

Downloadable Motion Form: www.sanon.org/wsc.html#Q4



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Sample Motion

Attachment A

MOTION: Move that:

1. The World Service Conference **support formation** of an ad-hoc committee composed of two sitting Delegates, BOT Policy Committee members, and other interested BOT members, **to study** the pros and cons of adding a section to the WSC Charter (Section XI. Conference Procedure) that would read as follows:

“In any vote taken by the WSC, the number of voting members will always be composed of at least 2/3 Delegates and no more than 1/3 other Conference members.”

If Motion One passes, move that:

2. The ad-hoc committee so formed **be directed to** (a) report back to next WSC regarding the pros and cons of adopting such a procedure, and (b) provide suggestions for practical implementation of such a procedure.

BACKGROUND and INTENT:

According to the “World Service Conference Charter,” a 2/3 vote of “WSC members” is required to bind the Board of Trustees, request the resignation of the whole BOT (3/4 vote); postpone the annual meeting (2/3 vote); and form a quorum (2/3 of the WSC members registered at the Conference). If, for example, 15 attending Delegates wished to give a specific direction to the BOT, and there were 12 sitting BOT members present at the Conference who were opposed to that direction, the Delegates would not be able to direct the Traditional activities of the BOT as intended by the spirit of our service structure.

Al-Anon has adopted the following procedure to ensure that the Delegates’ voice is always undeniably the final word on Traditional matters: If the attending Delegates do not constitute at least 2/3 of the attending WSC members, “other Conference Members” are chosen by lot to abstain from voting each time the question is called. All WSC members still have a “voice.”

The intent of this motion is to create an ad-hoc committee to consider the adoption of a voting procedure similar to Al-Anon’s, **to ensure that the Area Delegates, as representatives of the S-Anon groups, would always be able to overrule the Board of Trustees if the Delegates are united in their position.**

SUPPORTING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES:

- **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.” In order for a loving God to be expressed in our group conscience, we do well to trust the process and adhere to the democratic spirit of the S-Anon service structure.
- **Concept One:** “The ultimate responsibility and authority for S-Anon world services belongs to the S-Anon groups.” This speaks clearly to the purpose and necessity of this motion.
- **Concept Two:** “The S-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.” The Conference has a responsibility to the groups to maintain the integrity of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts.
- **Concept Six:** “The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.” *Paths to Recovery*, p. 286, “Our trustees, the active guardians of our Traditions, function as business leaders...” and p. 287 “...while our objectives are spiritual, we must trust someone to make things happen in order for our business to function. Trustees are members elected by members, and their qualifications are carefully considered.”

WHAT

List concise, specific actionable items for the WSC

WHY

State the reason the motion is needed and how it will help the Fellowship

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

List the most relevant Traditions and Concepts that support the motion

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SUPPORTING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES (continued):

- **Concept Seven:** “The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are Traditional.” The Conference is a “traditional” entity and its priorities are traditional instead of legal. The Delegates must always be in a position to carry out their duty to give binding direction on Traditional matters to the Board of Trustees. *Paths to Recovery*, p. 290, “Our spiritual democracy is maintained because the respect for the Conference’s traditional authority is backed up by the power of the groups and all the experience we have acquired to date. When the Conference acknowledges the rights, duties and legal responsibilities of the trustees, and the trustees remember the traditional rights of the Conference representing the group conscience of our fellowship, a harmonious and respectful working relationship can be maintained. Each is important and neither becomes a rubber stamp for the other. “

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Passage of this motion will have no financial impact.

ARGUMENT PRO:

To preserve the spirit of the S-Anon Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service, the Area Delegates, representing the voice of the S-Anon groups, should have the power, both in theory and in practice, to direct the Traditional activities of the Board of Trustees and the World Service Office. The motion maker believes that a study of the S-Anon Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service will support this assertion, and will call for a change to WSC voting procedures.

ARGUMENT CON:

It would be highly unusual for a situation to arise in which the Area Delegates and the Board of Trustees would be so sharply divided regarding a Traditional issue that the BOT could thwart the will of the Area Delegates representing the S-Anon groups. Creating an ad-hoc study group could be a waste of valuable volunteer time, since such a situation will probably never occur.

DOCUMENTATION:

- Results of this motion **will be documented in the Minutes of the current World Service Conference and will appear in the Decision Database maintained by the WSO.**
- If this motion passes, an ad-hoc study group will be formed, and the World Service Conference Committee will add an item to the next WSC Agenda to hear the report of the ad-hoc committee.

SUBMISSION DETAILS:

SUBMITTER: _____

AREA / POSITION _____

NAME OF MOTION MAKER (if different than the submitter)

MOTION MAKER TELEPHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL

(Requested so that the WSC Committee can contact the motion maker for clarification, if necessary.)

COST

Completed by
BOT Financial
Committee

PERSUASIVE POSITION

Summarize
“Intent” and
“Supporting
Principles”
sections

CONTRARY POSITION

Articulate an
opposing
viewpoint

RECORD KEEPING

Indicate where
the motion will
be recorded, if
passed

CONTACT INFORMATION

Provide so the
WSCC can
contact the
motion writer,
if necessary