

Topic One
The G.S.R., the Area Assembly and the Conference
March 8, 2025

In the Alcoholics Anonymous service structure, the group holds the ultimate authority. It delegates the responsibility of representing it in the area service structure to its representative (the G.S.R.) and, by the same token, at the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous through the delegate that the G.S.R.s themselves and all area trusted servants have elected for a two-year term.

When you read the first four chapters of the A.A. Service Manual, the principle of the inverted triangle is explained in detail. Chapter 3 states that at the heart of each area is the assembly meeting, where the democratic voice of our fellowship is expressed. Each area is autonomous, so not all assemblies operate in the same way. Assemblies generally have three functions. The first is to elect a delegate to represent the Area's conscience at the annual meeting of the General Service Conference, where decisions that affect A.A. throughout the U.S. and Canada are made. **Secondly, the purpose of the assembly is to form a local decision-making structure so that groups can collectively make decisions on Area affairs.** Finally, the way or ways to accomplish Twelfth Step work that can't be done by the group, district or the service office itself is (are) discussed at the assembly.

The situation in Area 87 is different from other parts of the Conference. In general, assemblies in other areas amply provide for the direct participation of G.S.R.s in the decisions that affect not only their groups, but the entire service structure of their area. In Area 87, only the October assembly allows G.S.R.s to vote directly to elect their representatives on the area's steering committee (delegate, chairperson, secretary, treasurer and their alternates). Except for this, our G.S.R.s delegate their right to speak and vote to their District Committee Member (D.C.M.), who in turn exercises his or her right to speak and vote at the Area Committee. Our G.S.R.s therefore have no opportunity to speak or vote on matters that directly affect their group and the area.

The local experience of 26 delegates of the General Services Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on the place of G.S.R.s in their service structure¹ was collected. With the exception of the 4 Quebec areas, other areas of the Conference (with a few exceptions) generally confirm that G.S.R.s have a voice and vote on all proposals submitted to their

¹ On January 2, 2025, I sent the following request for information to all delegates of the 75th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous: "I would like to hear your experience as an area within the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on the role of G.S.R.s at your area committee meetings and assemblies. Do your G.S.R.s have the right to speak and vote at your Area Committee meetings? Do your G.S.R.s have the right to speak and vote at your area assemblies? Do your G.S.R.s vote only once a year to elect your area officers (delegate, chairperson, treasurer, secretary and their alternates)? Do you give your G.S.R.s the right to speak and vote on issues of importance to your area directly at your area meetings or assemblies? Perhaps my questions are repetitive, but I'd like as much clarification as possible on this subject. We are currently reflecting on the role of our G.S.R.s as the voice of their groups in our deliberations.

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area assemblies, because G.S.R.s are the voice of their groups that are the ultimate authority (Area 4 - Arkansas).

As for Area Committee meetings, they are not considered decision-making but rather advisory or consultative. An area committee doesn't make policy. It only deals with current affairs (Area 35 - Northern Minnesota). At area meetings (), G.S.R.s can attend, but without the right to speak or vote. D.C.M.s carry the conscience of the groups in their districts (Area 59 - Eastern Pennsylvania). Area Committee meetings can submit topics or proposals for discussion by all trusted servants at the Area Assembly, including G.S.R.s. The G.S.R.s are therefore at the heart of the assemblies (Area 16 - Georgia).

As a general rule, G.S.R.s are the voice of the Fellowship, and the area honors, respects and appreciates their contribution and experience (Area 66 - Northwest Texas). As part of the agenda of each area meeting, the chairperson always asks G.S.R.s to share their concerns (Area 70 - Vermont). The meetings are voting meetings (Area 78 - Alberta/Northwest Territories). The general view is that every AA member has a voice and, through his or her G.S.R., a vote on all matters pertaining to Area business (Area 81 - New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island). Any proposal requiring a vote is always presented at the Area Meeting (Area 91 - Saskatchewan). G.S.R.s are the most important voice in the area, and NO policy changes or financial matters are discussed or voted on without the G.S.R.s (Area 92 - Eastern Washington).

Prospects for Our Area Moving Forward?

Why not let our groups themselves, through their G.S.R.s, express their concerns at our assemblies? At the Welcome Assembly on January 18, 2025, 58 G.S.R.s and 14 alternates G.S.R.s were present out of a total of nearly 400 groups (potentially 400 G.S.R.s plus 400 potential alternates). That's about 15% of our groups represented. We did have presentations, but no sharing sessions. Perhaps these sharing sessions would have enabled the G.S.R.s present to use their experience, strength and hope to contribute to the discussion on the well-being of A.A. in our area. Carrying the A.A. message is the "raison d'être" of our Fellowship.

1. Why invite only incoming G.S.R.s to the Welcome Assembly in January?
2. Why focus only on G.S.R.s or D.C.M.s completing their mandates, who are rotating at the Welcome Assembly in January?
3. Why not include G.S.R.s entering the second year of their mandate, and create connections with the incoming G.S.R.s, like that of a kind of "buddy" or "service sponsor"?

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We shouldn't try to duplicate the system that exists at the Conference, but use the idea of the accompanying of an incoming G.S.R. by a second-year G.S.R. or anyone else who can help them in their new task. Enlist second-year G.S.R.s into the service of first-year G.S.R.s, not force them to “pair up” to do something they might not necessarily want to do, but create opportunities for exchange.

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If I am to believe the 2025 Welcome Assembly invitation, it suggests that the annual Welcome Assembly is only for new and rotating G.S.R.s. It would simply be a change of perspective to have an Assembly of G.S.R.s, for incoming servants, those at mid-term and those completing their mandate.

But then again, an ideal formula would be to involve them, as is the case elsewhere in the Conference, in discussions and decision-making on subjects that directly concern their group.

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