

World Services Reporting on Lawsuit June 2020-October 2021

Reporting below is what we published in *NAWS News* and general eblasts related to lawsuits.

NAWS News June 2020

The protection of the NA message is a responsibility entrusted to us by the Fellowship that we take seriously. That responsibility, and the rather significant expenses that come with it around the world, are ongoing, and we have to ensure that funds continue to remain available to cover this responsibility. In addition to regular trademark registrations, copyrights, and renewals that are ongoing responsibilities, we have also been drawn into legal challenges involving either the NA name or the content of NA literature in Russia and the Philippines. In addition, we have a July court date for a legal petition filed in the US. Since these are all current legal issues, there is not a lot more we can say at this time.

General Eblast 30 November 2020

As you may know, World Services was recently involved in a US court case in which a group of members sought to remove NA World Services as Trustee of the *FIPT*. The judge's final order has been issued, and the judge ruled that the members did not have standing to bring such a case. It seemed like a good time to issue these bulletins.

We have written a new introduction to Bulletin #34, and here's a passage from that:

Decisions in NA are made by group conscience, and the vehicle to hear group conscience on a world level is the World Service Conference (WSC). The WSC is the means by which "NA groups have a mechanism to guide and direct the activities of NA World Services" (WSC Mission Statement).

No matter how convinced a group of individual members may be that their cause is legitimate, "we can only be governed by a loving God as expressed in our group conscience." The individuals who brought the legal action were seeking to cancel the WSC decisions through a legal court. That is not how we make decisions in NA. We have paths to follow for issues that the Fellowship wants to discuss. When those paths tell you no, guided by our Second Tradition, the answer is not to try to go outside of NA to change that outcome.

We are unified as a Board in our commitment to the Fellowship's conscience.

NAWS News December 2020

Court Case

We have reported about a US court case we have been involved with in multiple forums—email, webinars, *NAWS News*. The judge issued a final decision at the end of September, and we were looking forward to putting the matter behind us. Regrettably, the group of members who initially

brought the case have now filed an appeal, so we will have to spend more money and energy that could be going to supporting efforts to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

To refresh your memory, in early 2020, a group of members calling themselves “the Autonomous Region” petitioned the court to remove NA World Services as Trustee of the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust (FIPT)*.

The *FIPT* was set up to ensure that NA’s “intellectual property,” the recovery literature, symbols, and name, would be protected from misuse or corruption. It is a legal document that spells out the collective decisions of the Fellowship in this regard, including World Services’ responsibility and authority to administer the property on behalf of the Fellowship. No service body or group of individuals can own or control NA’s literature and logos; the ownership and control belongs to NA as a whole. As the trustee, NAWS is tasked with keeping NA’s property safe.

In an effort to increase access to some of the history and background related to group conscience and NA literature, we recently made two reports from the Board from 2014 and 2015 into bulletins (#34 and #35) and added an introduction to Bulletin #34. You can find those bulletins, the *FIPT* itself, and other related documents posted here www.na.org/fipt.

The original reports that we have reformatted into bulletins were written in response to the illicit publication of NA literature. On a fundamental level, the current court case and the illicit printing of literature arise from the same misguided motivation—the belief that it is okay to disregard the will of the Fellowship. The authority in NA is a loving Higher Power, and that power expresses itself through group conscience. The mechanism for hearing that conscience on a world level is the World Service Conference. The members bringing this case wish to overturn the decisions of the World Service Conference through a court ruling.

It’s contrary to NA principles, and it has cost the Fellowship a lot of money. We’ve spent over \$200,000 on this case so far, and the amount will rise with the appeal being filed. We’re fortunate to have the lawyer who originally helped draft the *FIPT* for this case, but that expertise does not come cheaply. Safeguarding NA’s literature to protect NA’s message is probably the most important thing we do at World Services, and it’s worth devoting resources to that effort, but we can’t help but think of how many Basic Texts that could have been sent to struggling NA communities or incarcerated members for that money.

We hope to have better news to report soon. Thank you to everyone who has helped to spread accurate information and to honor the will of the Fellowship.

NAWS News October 2021

Legal Activity

An appeal has been filed related to the US court case we have reported on in the past. The judge had issued a decision in September. The appeal means that the case is, however, still active. We do not expect a ruling on the appeal until sometime in 2022. Because this is a current legal case, we cannot report much except to say that we regret having to spend money, time, and energy on this matter.