

## Defend your voting rights!

**Your vote counts! Please vote „AGAINST“ proposal A.**



**AGAINST**

By Thomas Skipwith, ATM-S, AL

**Proposal A is about the process of setting membership dues. I am AGAINST this proposal of the board of directors of TMI. Why?**

**I am AGAINST this**

Five reasons:

1. Because the proposal, if accepted by the member clubs, would take away the members' voting rights on one of the most important issues of Toastmasters: membership dues and ultimately the budget of more than USD 12 million per year. **The proposal is asking us, the member clubs, to give a "carte blanche" to the board of directors to raise dues at their own discretion!** For more than 80 years the members and member clubs (the people) were the ones that decided on what the membership dues should be. This is just like the shareholders of a company are able to agree or disagree with what the board of directors suggests. This is good. This gives the control to the members and shareholders. Therefore we should vote against proposal A.
2. Because the members ought to have a say in where the organization is going. And this is heavily influenced by membership dues. Let me explain: The Toastmasters mission is "...the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality." While \$54 annually are little to almost all those who live in developed countries, including me, it is serious money for people of third world countries. But isn't it in the third world where the big potential for growth of the organization lies? By increasing the fees TMI is excluding the countries

with little purchasing power. I trust that we all want this great organization to grow so everyone can benefit. Therefore the members and member clubs, not TMI, should have a say in future increases of dues and therefore the budget. Therefore we should vote against proposal A.

3. Because as members and member clubs we are not presented with a detailed budget as to how our money is spent. The yearly financial report (published usually in June of every year) does not allow enough detail to see how our money is spent. With the 50% increase in dues in 2005 (increase of \$4 mio. per year to \$12 mio.) it

### Remembering 2005

In 2005 Toastmasters International found itself in the third year of large losses: their expenses had by far exceeded the income and therefore had created a debt of several million dollars. It was decided to increase the membership fees by 50% (!) instead of reducing expenses. The increase, not surprisingly, sparked heavy protests from members. Fortunately, there had to be a vote by the member clubs. Unfortunately, the proposal of the 50% increase was approved by a majority.

Why did it take 3 years to ask the members about a dues increase? Why were there no other options (proposals) offered?

was promised that new educational programs were going to be developed. At club level I have noticed one (1) new program (the competent leader). Does it take \$8 mio. to develop this new program? I am currently working on my AC-G with materials that are from 1988. The materials are good, no need for big change, it's just that the question remains: What is the money used for? I expect a detailed report. Another example: All foreign language manuals have to be translated for free at the district and club level by volunteers. Then, TMI takes the copyright of the materials and sells them to those who translated them as well as their fellow members. It doesn't feel right and it does not create any need for additional funds. Therefore the members and member clubs, not TMI, should have a say as to future increases of dues and the budget. Therefore, we should vote against proposal A.

4. Because I believe that there should remain a system of checks and balances. The constitution and bylaws of Toastmasters are set up that way. It means, that the board of directors has to consult (via proposals) with the members and member clubs about important questions. I believe that is good. Just like it is good that a government of a country has to consult with the people every few years (in some countries more

often, i.e. Switzerland) whether they are still on track. Therefore I believe that moving the competence about setting dues from the members to the board of directors an unwise decision. It is one of the few means that the members can voice their opinion about where the organization of Toastmasters is headed. Therefore, we should vote against proposal A..

5. Because the name of the proposal "improving the process of setting membership dues" sounds misleading to me. I don't share the opinion that it is improving the process nor that it is complicated to suggest a proposal and bring it in front of the members for a vote. It has been done many times before. It is being done now with proposal A. And, in the past, what the dues

are concerned, it only took place once every 10 years. The change only removes one of the members' rights: the opportunity to approve of the board of directors direction. Therefore, we should vote against proposal A.

I like to keep a say in this organization. Don't you? Help to keep our voting rights for future dues increases! Vote **against** proposal A.

About the author:

Thomas Skipwith is a long time Toastmaster. He first joined the organization in 1997, when he joined the Stuttgart Toastmasters Club. In the meantime he has taken many roles, from VP PR to president, founded two TM clubs and has been area governor. Currently he is the president of the "Rhetorik Club Zürich". He has a master's degree in business administration and runs his own business out of Zurich, Switzerland. Thomas is a professional trainer for public speaking. Contact him at: [defendmemberrights@toastmasters.ch](mailto:defendmemberrights@toastmasters.ch)

You can find the latest news about this proposal via the website:

<http://www.toastmasters.ch/all/defendmemberrights.html> including a link to the standpoint of the board of directors on [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org). Check the website regularly. Also you will soon find a Q&A on this proposal.

**Pass this article on to your fellow members and committee members. Defend your voting rights! Vote AGAINST proposal A.**