

Minutes of NRC Council Meeting – June 2-4, 2006

The VOTF National Representative Council (NRC) met at The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in Chicago, Illinois, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 2-4, 2006.

Friday Evening: June 2, 2006

Attending: 21 voting representatives (17 reps. and 4 alternates): Dan Bartley (Region 2), Bud Bretschneider (Region 3), Bill Culleton (Region 3), Donna Doucette (Region 1), Frank Douglas (Region 13), Ron DuBois (Region 1), Ed Friedl (Region 6), Jim Jenkins (Region 11), Bob Kaintz (Region 9), Linda Mains (Region 12), Jane Merchant (Region 1), Dee O'Neal (Region 7), Hugh O'Regan (Region 11), Sheila Peiffer (Region 2), Susan Vogt (Region 5), Tony Wiggins (Region 1), Ed Wilson (Region 2). **Alternates:** Lucy Abu-Absi (Region 6), Mark Bennett (Region 10), Suzanne Lynch (Region 14), Judy Miller (Region 4). **Officers:** Sally Vance-Trembath (Vice President), Gaile Pohlhaus (Secretary), Mary Freeman (Treasurer) and one member of the Board of Trustees: Jim Post. **Observers:** Stephanie McElligott (recording secretary), Paula Kaintz, Don Lynch, Chuck Miller and Anne Wilson.

Meeting called to order: 7:15 PM by Ron DuBois

Ron DuBois welcomed all, explained the schedule for the evening, reviewed meeting rules and distributed the opening prayer. He announced that the board has budgeted \$10,000 for NRC meetings and anyone needing assistance to defray attendance costs should not be embarrassed to use it. Anyone wishing to contribute to the cost of attendance or donate travel expenses could request an in-kind donation statement from Executive Director Ray Joyce. All contributions should be considered strictly voluntary. A special request was made for Joyce to send thank you letters to all contributors. The opening prayer was said.

Agenda discussion: Jim Jenkins asked when the agenda would be reviewed and whether reports would be submitted in writing. He said it would be better to react to written reports and the group should be able to approve the agenda in advance. Peiffer questioned the purpose of another agenda review, because ample opportunity was given via email and list serves for input on agenda revision before the meeting. She added that the scheduled verbal reports would be about ten minutes each. DuBois queried the council to see how many wanted to discuss the agenda again. No one indicated a desire to do so.

Observer Chuck Miller questioned whether the council wanted to spend two hours discussing decision-making, which was the scheduled Friday night session. Several Representatives (Culleton, O'Regan, Wiggins) and Vice President Vance-Trembath) spoke on the need to proceed with the existing agenda. DuBois said specific NRC-related examples would be used in the decision-making discussion. With no further objections apparent, DuBois moved ahead to the next item on the published agenda.

At the request of Dee O'Neal, Representatives and others attending the Friday session introduced themselves.

In response to a request from Moderator DuBois, Hugh O'Regan volunteered to submit a short summary of the meeting to Peggie Thorp for "In the Vineyard" by Wednesday June 7.

Decision-Making Discussion: Linda Mains, Facilitator

Purpose of the presentation and discussion was to examine ways the NRC could apply a standard model of participative decision-making to decisions made within VOTF. Three main concepts were stressed: 1) the value of a shared language, 2) the importance of a participative process to increase acceptance/commitment, and 3) how to apply the model to VOTF work.

The advantages of participative decision-making are that it provides more information to the people involved, develops more approaches and increased acceptance, and allows for a better understanding of the decision made.

The disadvantages are that it may lead to a premature decision, that individuals may dominate the process, that conflicting solutions cannot be resolved, and that responsibility for the decision is ambiguous.

Even if a group is responsible for a making a decision, “someone” must be responsible for implementing it.

Mains then reviewed the model and levels of the decision-making continuum: a) leader-only (autocratic) decisions; b) leader makes decisions but with informal input from others; c) leader makes decision after obtaining formal input (a consultative process that could include votes by those consulted); d) consensus decisions; e) delegated decisions. She noted that even in a participative environment, there are still decisions that are appropriate for a leader to make alone, and also times when a local person or group should make a decision on their own.

She also reviewed the behaviors needed for effective participation versus those characteristic of ineffective participation. Ineffective participation includes “selling” a preferred option, listening to others only with an eye toward refuting their comments, not listening at all, defending your position “to the end” (i.e., not being willing to consider other options), allowing a few members to dominate the discussion, and seeking to convert others to your position by lobbying them.

In contrast, effective participation involves listening to understand, being willing to change your mind, allowing full participation, trying out new ideas, and finding stimulation in disagreement.

Mains also noted that in participative decision-making, voting too soon can cut off consensus, if that is your goal.

Discussion points:

- It’s important to decide what formal vehicle is used to indicate consensus (vote, show of hands, etc.).
- Consensus requires acceptance, not agreement with decision – it doesn’t mean unanimity, although unanimity may be desirable for important issues. Consensus is a “Level 9” decision, where not all participants need to buy into the decision full bore, but can at least “live with it.” At the Level 9 decision, it is also possible for the leader to veto the decision. In a Level 10 decision, the group itself makes the choice.
- If consensus cannot be reached, then the group must make a consultative decision.
- The use of majority rule: Donna Doucette clarified Council policy noting that operational decisions require a simple majority rule, substantive (policy-related) decisions and VOTF announcements require a 2/3 majority. This policy defines how the council reaches decisions, but doesn’t help deal with how the minority group thinks/feels/reacts. Consensus allows for bigger buy-in and support of decisions.
- O’Neal noted that persuasion in consensus building can sometimes morph into undue pressure with unwanted outcomes. Both consensus and majority rule have a place.
- Mains emphasized that the end result may dictate the process used. If a decision can be successfully implemented without total buy-in, then a majority vote decision (consultative) may be sufficient. If total buy-in is needed for success, then consensus is needed. The NRC wants participative decisions, but this could be anywhere along the continuum depending on where one wants to be at the end of the process. When consensus can’t be reached and a consultative decision is needed, people must: stop selling their positions and start listening, ask other questions, change positions, allow themselves to be influenced, or decide not to decide.
- DuBois noted the near impossibility in reaching consensus via email discussions. Various communication options were discussed including in-person meetings, email, exclusive chat-rooms, phone conferences, or chats with cameras.
- Bill Culleton emphasized the need for findings of fact to be presented by the most appropriate leadership group. The principle of subsidiarity was mentioned briefly in relation to this. Sheila Peiffer said a more thorough discussion of this principle would take place on Saturday.

- Which level is the appropriate place for certain decisions/issues? Frank Douglas underscored the need for the Council to understand how it and the Board of Trustees make decisions. There was discussion of “form follows function” and use of the by-laws as the basis for decisions: which VOTF leadership group decides what. Jenkins said he did not think there was clear enough understanding of the functions of various VOTF groups (Board of Trustees, NRC, officers etc.).
- Ed Wilson said there is limit to what can be legislated in advance and that time-sensitivity may influence or even dictate the way decisions are reached.
- Context should be presented for consultative decision-making – so the group has confidence and trust that the decision reached is reasonable. There was considerable time spent discussing the Chicago situation as an example of this. This discussion touched on the local vs. national decision-making role. Some of the issues discussed regarding the Chicago issue included how well/poorly VOTF officers communicated the extent of consultation prior to decisions and announcements, a concern for the fairness of the process, and establishment of a better framework for future consultations on important issues. Doucette said sufficient clarification of this issue required the input of key players, which would take place on Saturday (June 3), when Region 7 alternate, Janet Hauter, would speak to this topic.

At this point, there were additional questions raised by Jenkins to clarify the parameters of the agenda for Saturday, especially regarding the Chicago issue and national vs. local subsidiarity.

Motion to proceed with published agenda: Culleton moved to proceed with the published agenda. Ed Friedl seconded the motion. The vote of the NRC was 20 in favor with one abstention (O’Neal). Motion passed.

Motion to extend time for Friday discussion: Bud Bretschneider moved and Bill Culleton seconded a motion to extend the evening’s discussion time until 9:15 PM. Vote was unanimous in favor. Motion passed.

Decision-Making Discussion Continues: A sample issue of writing a welcome letter to a new bishop (from VOTF Greater Cincinnati Coordinating Committee) was used as an example to review the decision-making process within a VOTF setting. A set of questions was proposed as a way for leadership to determine the best process:

1. Would the decision to proceed be routinely accepted? If it’s not a “no-brainer,” then some form of consultation is needed.
2. Is the potential for conflict among members likely to be high? If so, then consultation is needed.
3. Is acceptance a priority? If this is the only criterion to be considered, then consultative decision-making is a must.
4. Quality with acceptance also is a factor: Who has the knowledge, the skills, and the ability to make the decision?

Discussion points:

- Dan Bartley said that it is important to consider if a decision will set a precedent; those that do should always involve consultation.
- Judy Miller asked if it is policy for the National Office to send welcome letters to bishops. Why would it be ok to send a letter to one bishop and not do so on a broader scale? The rationale for local affiliates to send such letters makes sense as a way to initiate working relationships.
- Tony Wiggins commented that having the National Office write such a letter could be meaningful to a specific locality, in support of the efforts of a local affiliate, to give it strength.
- Donna Doucette said that National should not comment on local issues unless asked to do so by local leadership. There is need to define what’s local and what’s national in scope.
- Dan Bartley said that when National speaks with an official voice it’s important to think through that statement carefully because the potential for damage is great. He said national letters coming from the Board of Trustees should be vetted through the NRC first to check for objections. Mark Bennett concurred.

- Linda Mains reminded the Reps that the model for the NRC is not “consensus”; it’s participative decision-making. Consensus is simply one choice that can be made as one carries out participative decision-making. The NRC should consider developing criteria for the form of participation that’s needed in particular circumstances. Equally important: The TYPE of process to be used in the decision-making must be clear up front – if it’s not, even if it was the “right type” of process, the decision still may not be accepted. People must know the process before it’s carried out.

Motion to extend time for Friday discussion: Since discussion had already passed the 9:15PM deadline, DuBois moved to extend discussion until 9:30PM. The motion was seconded. Vote was 16 in favor, 5 against. Motion passed.

O’Neal requested clarification of the voting process. DuBois noted that only NRC members and alternates may vote. Officers and observers cannot.

Decision-Making Discussion Continues:

- Douglas: NRC should identify levels for decision-making (Levels 1, 2, 3) and define what type of consultation is needed at each level and how it should take place.
- Culleton agreed on the need for criteria and said that fact-finding should be defined, including the identification of those best suited to do particular fact-finding.
- Observer Anne Wilson suggested that stake-holders (those most affected by a decision) should be identified and the results of action or inaction noted.
- Jane Merchant: leadership can consult meaningfully while retaining the ability to make final decision.
- O’Regan requested an affirmation of subsidiarity: before National makes an announcement or writes letters, it should consult with local affiliates. Process to work through conflicts must be established.
- Observer Chuck Miller: understand that national doesn’t always need to defer to local.

All participants thanked DuBois and Mains for their work.
The Friday evening session was adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Saturday, June 3, 2006 – AM Session

DuBois called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.
O’Neal distributed a prayer handout and led the group in prayer.

Attending: In addition to those attending on Friday: Bob Morris (Region 1), Janet Hauter (alternate for Region 7), Mary Pat Fox (officer - National President), Maura O’Brien (member – Board of Trustees), Executive Director Ray Joyce, and seven observers from the Chicago region. Total NRC voting members: 23

Reports from Committees of the Council:

- I. **NRC Elections** – Ron DuBois reported.
 - a. Each region is responsible for the election of their own Representatives to the NRC
 - b. 5 reps have resigned:
 - 1) Ginny O’Toole (Region 7) resigned due to illness. Mary Heins facilitated the selection of Dee O’Neal to replace O’Toole.
 - 2) Mary Pat Fox (Region 2) resigned to take the national President position; Ed Wilson has been elected as her replacement.
 - 3) Marge Lynch (Region 14) – 2 candidates have come forward and there will be an election soon.
 - 4) Mary Heins (Region 7) – 1 candidate has come forward; Dee O’Neal will oversee this election.

- 5) Evelyn Mercantini (Region 4) – Judy Miller will facilitate the election to replace this Rep
 c. Mary Collingwood (Region 6) will be resigning soon; likely date: June 30. Election will be needed.

Discussion points on NRC Elections:

- It's not the job of the Executive Director or the national staff to help regions run elections.
- Alice Campanella (part-time staff) can assist with technical problems (bounce-backs etc.) related to Donor Perfect. All NRC members should be familiar with using this software.
- National needs "tech-savvy" volunteers to assist with cut and paste work to update the Donor Perfect database lists. As of now, each Representative using the National database list is responsible for collecting all bounced emails and reporting that email address and bounce-reason to Alice Campanella for cleanup.
- NRC is hoping for wider participation in elections on the regional level.
- O'Neal considers the turnover of NRC representatives a serious issue and hopes candidates running for election to NRC will make strong commitments to complete their terms.
- Douglas suggested forming a Membership Committee of volunteers to assist with work on membership lists. DuBois supported this idea. He said the by-laws give the Board of Trustees (BOT) responsibility for oversight of election procedures, and he would favor more feedback from BOT on this. He would also like BOT to give more feedback on important issues via the website.
- DuBois and Peiffer offered to assist council members needing help with Donor Perfect
- O'Regan recommended that the Council formally notify the board that it has identified problem(s) with VOTF membership list and ask officers to find solution. Doucette said any email list will need continuous maintenance. Jim Post agreed that it is good for NRC to register this as a complaint, noting that the bylaws identify membership as a secretarial responsibility. He underscored the importance of having a reliable, credible database and of insuring a credible election process consistent with established protocol. He agreed the turnover problem is a serious problem and said NRC has the power to define an adequate election process.
- DuBois: election procedures have already been set-up and sent out twice. He will send out again, and the steering committee will help anyone working on regional elections. The template for the process will be posted in the files on the Council list's Web page.

II. **By-laws Report** – Bill Culleton reported.

- a. The existing bylaws are standard for the state of Massachusetts where VOTF is incorporated, with most authority vested in the Board of Trustees (BOT).
- b. Culleton reviewed the recent history of efforts to update the by-laws, noting that NRC representatives (himself, Bob Kaintz and Ginny O'Toole) made 11 specific recommendations for change that were reviewed by the BOT and its attorneys. Those suggestions and others resulted in the current draft, which is to be voted on at the next BOT meeting. Some of the suggestions for change included:
 - Add a phrase to require consultation with NRC and officers on three specific areas before taking action – accepted by the BOT for the current draft
 - A request to delete some language from existing bylaws – accepted
 - Added three details about NRC structure – accepted
 - A mechanism to revoke an affiliate's association with VOTF – accepted
 - A mechanism to amend the by-laws – accepted
 - A mechanism for submitting an issue to a vote of the members – accepted.
 - A phrase denoting the purpose of the NRC was accepted in a truncated version.
 - A change to Article 3 not to limit the NRC to 26 members and with NRC terms set to two years and three consecutive terms (for a total of six consecutive years service) – accepted.
 - A suggestion to clarify the roles of ad hoc committees – not accepted.
 - The suggestion to have an elected BOT was revised to allow six of 11 trustees to be elected by the NRC, with two of these six to be current members of the NRC. The nominating process calls for a

Nominating Committee selected by the BOT (with four of the seven Committee members to be current trustees and three from the general VOTF membership) to present to the NRC suitable candidates for “election” to the BOT.

- The phrasing of paragraph 3 section 5 Article 1 giving the BOT authority to fill vacancies if the NRC fails to act to elect within a 45-day limit was supposed to be changed also, with the word “elect” changed to “approve or disapprove.” Culleton said he was checking to be sure this change was reflected accurately in the draft by-laws. He confirmed that if the NRC disapproves the names put forward by the nominating committee, new names would need to be put forward.

Points of clarification: O’Neal questioned the right of meeting observers to comment during discussion. DuBois confirmed that it has been the established protocol of the VOTF Representative Council, since its formation, to allow observers to contribute to discussions without time limit, but that they cannot vote.

Several members remarked on their inability to discuss the by-laws without having a written copy available. O’Neal requested that written copies of the by-laws be provided at meetings for future reference. Peiffer said there were several rounds of emails sent prior to the meeting discussing the bylaw material and that a copy was posted on the list and in the files, available for reading and downloading.

Discussion points on bylaws:

- The NRC can initiate policy but can’t promulgate it independently without BOT approval, which has the ultimate authority.
- Language was drafted to respect the authority of both the BOT and NRC.
- The objections of the BOT to an all-elected board dealt with the issues of strategic planning, specific trustee competencies and establishing a collegial group dynamic which may be better accommodated when the board has some choice in who serves.
- Culleton: a suggestion to establish a committee to review/renew/revise VOTF structure was not accepted, but much thought was put into the revision process and NRC advocacy was strenuous. Because of this, the BOT is not receptive to further bylaws changes in the near term. The revised bylaws need to be given a chance to work first, and the NRC has more urgent (external) matters to deal with.
- Regarding affiliates: the bylaws confirm the affiliates as independent organizations and not part of National VOTF because of the possible negative impact that affiliate lobbying could have on National’s 501(c) 3 status (it could be lost). Affiliates are required to subscribe to VOTF mission and goals and to follow policy decisions in a limited way.

Motion to accept bylaw revisions as drafted: Ed Wilson moved and Tony Wiggins seconded a motion to accept the bylaws revisions as drafted and presented. Vote of the NRC was 22 in favor, 1 abstention (O’Neal). Motion passed.

III. **Steering Committee Report** – Donna Doucette reported.

- a. Doucette distributed a handout summarizing NRC Steering Committee Responsibilities and verbally noted the main responsibilities of the committee as list maintenance, operating procedures, meeting agenda preparation, record keeping and processing of resolutions. With the resignation of Douglas from the committee, a new member will be elected. Douglas stated he resigned due to over-commitment and a desire to spend more time on local affiliate issues.
- b. Nominations for the steering committee were requested and the following were nominated:
 1. Bill Culleton
 2. Linda Mains
 3. Hugh O’Regan

- c. There was a break for ten minutes during which time the steering committee election was held. The initial ballots were essentially a three-way tie, so a lottery was held with all three names submitted. Culleton was selected to the Steering Committee.

IV. **Board of Trustees Nominating Committee Report** – Sheila Peiffer reported

- a. Peiffer read a statement (attached) explaining the reason for her resignation from the Board of Trustees Nominating Committee on May 31, 2006.
- b. DuBois asked Maura O’Brien and Jim Post (Nominating Committee members) to explain the rationale for submitting only a four-person slate to the NRC rather than presenting all of the candidates the Committee deemed qualified to be trustees.

Post spoke to the seriousness of the bylaws revisions and VOTF governance and said the move to elect some trustees is part of this work. He noted that the diversity of the current BOT is not great and hoped this would improve with the new board. He reviewed the plan for board composition: 11 total members with six elected by NRC, three appointed by the existing BOT (persons with special skills or large donors), the current President, and the immediate Past President. Of the six elected trustees, two will be NRC members and four others are to be elected by the NRC from a slate submitted by the committee.

The Nominating Committee consists of four current trustees and three non-trustees: Peiffer, Peg Clark and Ken Sauer. A total of 30 candidates submitted statements of interest for nomination to the BOT. These submissions were narrowed to 12 and the committee is conducting phone interviews with those 12.

Post said the bylaws give no direction on how many names should be submitted by the committee for election, and the committee voted with 5 in favor, 1 opposed and 1 abstention to put forth a slate of four names for the four positions. He said a review of the candidates indicates 10 qualified candidates from the first round of interviews; that number does not include current trustees (Maura O’Brien and David Castaldi) who have indicated that they wish to be considered as candidates for the new BOT. As a result, the Nominating Committee could submit more than four names to the NRC, but the Committee felt its job was to put forward the best set of names it could to facilitate the most effective board.

Post said no one on the committee wanted Sheila to resign; but BOT success depends on the right mix of talents so members can work in a collaborative way and a majority of the committee thought this was the best way to do that. Protections already exist against a self-perpetuating BOT.

Discussion points on Nominating Committee:

- Doucette asked for clarification: Was the decision to submit only four names made before the Committee had interviewed the candidates and determined whether there might be more than four who qualified? Post said yes, the decision was made first. Doucette said this appeared to prejudice the nominee pool, before seeing how many qualified candidates were available.
- Susan Vogt asked what pitfalls the Committee saw in having more than four names put forward. Post replied that a holistic picture of the board framed their decision.
- Peiffer agreed that a diverse, cohesive board is important but thinks the NRC is capable of keeping this in mind when electing trustees from a larger slate. If we want an organization with more participative governance, the Nominating Committee should not decide for the NRC.
- Several members expressed concern about the submission of a four-person slate for four positions when more than four are qualified, asking why have an “election” at all if there is no choice in who gets seated. Bartley drew an analogy between the bishop selection process and what is perceived as a very controlled BOT “election.”
- Bretschneider said that perception is important; not having a true choice for the NRC perpetuates the image that the NRC doesn’t have much to say. There should be trust in the NRC and the power of the Holy Spirit in influencing the BOT in a good way. Several others expressed similar sentiments that there should be more trust of the NRC. As the first election under the new bylaws it will set precedent; how the NRC and BOT work together says a lot and these are legitimate concerns. He suggested asking the BOT to work it out.

- Post: trust works both ways and suggested the NRC should trust that the committee.
- Merchant agreed noting there should be trust of the committee; putting forward a slate is an “efficiency thing.”
- O’Brien said it is important for incoming trustees to have their authority legitimized by the NRC. She said she looks to the future and the ramifications for the independence of the board if board members owed their seats to the NRC, which she feared could happen in a contested election without a slate. She also questioned how NRC members would determine winning candidates – would the NRC duplicate the work already done by the nominating committee to vet the candidates?
- DuBois responded that a workable procedure to review candidate statements is already in place for the election of National Officers and has worked, and that council members are capable of making good choices.
- Doucette: Efficiency should not trump the concept of a true election. She suggested the impasse could be handled if the council endorses a slate from the full number of qualified candidates put forward.
- O’Neal noted her objection to the word “election” if only a slate of four is put forward; the word used should be “select,” and the nominating committee should be called “search committee.” She said she would not participate if the process were called an election when it is not. Judy Miller agreed that the word “elect” is not appropriate since the trustees would essentially be “appointed.”
- Douglas suggested looking for a compromise position, perhaps with NRC to have a true choice for only two or three spots instead of four, if the BOT is worried about too many trustees being influenced by the Council. Then the committee could appoint the others.
- DuBois summarized the scope of the discussion noting there appeared to be a clear conflict with a majority of the council wanting a real election with a choice of candidates, and asked the Nominating Committee to reconsider their options.
- Post: NRC has a “meaningful vote” with slate because of their ability to vote down presented candidates, and asked to continue the discussion off-line with individual council members.
- In response to concerns that a true NRC election would lead to trustee candidates “campaigning” to obtain votes, Peiffer noted that it would be much easier to campaign for votes among seven Nominating Committee members than among a 26-person Council.
- Fox reminded the council that when there is a conflict between the officers and the NRC, the BOT acts as tie-breaker and therefore it’s essential that it be independent.
- Several Representatives, alluding to the concepts presented in the Friday workshop, suggested that there should be a way to revisit the BOT election process and listen again to each other.

Motion to resolve disagreement on BOT nominations: Culleton introduced the following motion:

“The Council requests that two (2) BOT representatives enter into discussion with two (2) representatives from the NRC to resolve this disagreement regarding BOT nominations for four “at large” members.” Hugh O’Regan seconded the motion. Vote of the council was 21 for and 2 against (Friedl and Merchant). Motion passed.

Additional comments:

- Bartley remarked that this is a philosophical issue at heart and the results of the vote indicate NRC is overwhelmingly in favor of more participative organization and hopes the BOT will not ignore this.

V. **Special report on Chicago situation** – Janet Hauter reported. (See reported attached)

Discussion points on “Chicago situation”:

- O’Neal thanked Janet for coming and for the report.
- Observer Colleen Strening (N. Suburban Chicago Affiliate) and one or two additional Chicago affiliate observers commented briefly.
- Hauter emphasized that Cardinal George’s distrust was based on the fact he took issue with VOTF member Jim Mueller speaking on his behalf after a previous meeting. She said her group is respectful of

the relationship they are building and did not offer full disclosure of the meeting for that reason. She hopes to be able to report more at a future meeting.

DuBois adjourned the Saturday morning session for lunch at 12:30 PM. He announced the steering committee would adjust the agenda for the PM session and discussion on Janet's report would continue after lunch.

Saturday, June 3, 2006 – PM Session

DuBois and Peiffer reviewed the revised agenda:

1:15 Prayer
 1:20 "Chicago" questions
 1:30 Discussion on relationship between national and local
 2:00 Report from President with questions
 2:30 Discussion on consultation process among Council, Officers and Board
 3:30 Presentation by Executive Director and Treasurer
 4:00 Strategy for Growth – D. Bartley
 4:30 Accountability Now

Sally Vance-Trembath led the prayer.

Continued discussion points on "Chicago" report:

- What was the factual basis of stating that people did not want to call for resignation? The Chicago situation was not parallel to Boston in that Chicago priests did not come out in support of resignation.
- When does the Chicago Council expect a response from Cardinal George? Janet said they are waiting for a response to their next letter; they will then set another meeting. She said the archdiocese acknowledged that processes are broken and the audits are being responded to in a task driven way. The monitoring process will be the last issue discussed.
- Bennett referenced his work with the bishop of Ft. Worth and said it's important that deadlines be set and stuck to in order to make next step decisions.
- Jenkins said sharing some of the Chicago experience is helpful for other affiliates to develop strategies for dealing with Church leadership since they (Los Angeles diocese) may be faced with similar issues. He asked if other affiliates can help in any way.
- Hauter: Chicago will use archival material to issue a "white paper" to document information upon completion of discussions. They may send questions to other affiliates during that process.
- There was much discussion on National's role in the Chicago situation. Jenkins noted the need for the National organization to have a coordinated communication strategy. Fox explained what National did and why. Post said we need to assess how effective these communications were.

O'Neal said it was one thing for National to issue a statement on what may be perceived as a national issue, but local affiliates should not be telling other affiliates what to do. Bartley noted that his regional affiliates, who had called for Cardinal George to resign as bishop, did so on the basis of its being a national issue; his affiliate would never tell another affiliate what it should do.

There was continued discussion on what defines a local or national issue. Observer Chuck Miller said his Maryland affiliate thought the Chicago situation was a national issue and explained why. Bartley from Region 1 (New York) agreed.

O'Neal expressed displeasure with the inappropriate comments in many emails sent to Chicago leadership. DuBois emphasized that members need to be respectful in their comments to each other.

Culleton said this issue brought out the relevancy of subsidiarity and the need to determine which is the appropriate leadership body to make a decision on a national statement. He thought it may be more appropriate for VOTF officers to handle an issue like this than 23 people on a list serve.

Hauter explained that the information shared with the officers was frequent and massive, and if National had called for the Cardinal's resignation, there would not have been any meeting with him.

Many council members expressed support for the outcome of the Chicago situation. However, Judy Miller said she thought the National statement RE: USCCB resignation was a "cop-out." Post explained the statement was designed as a signal to CG that his appointment as acting head if Skylstad (Seattle) stepped down would not go un-noticed.

- Doucette asked when national has a right to make a statement that might go against the wishes of a local affiliate. DuBois said not many council members knew how much thought and discussion went into the national's decision. Vance-Trembath explained that theologians were consulted for their opinions on the issue and that not one thought the cardinal should be asked to resign. She added that the Chicago affiliate exhibited authority, responsible competence and a plan. Fox said constant explanation was given to the membership but many did not accept what they heard because they did not agree and there was a feeling of futility in continuing the explanations.
- Culleton suggested the following process for making national vs. local decision:
 - National must consult with the local affiliate first for fact finding
 - Don't act on assumptions – determine the local impact of the issue
 - Weigh national impact vs. local impact of various actions
 - Local handling of the issue is relevant
 - Determine if officers or NRC should make statement/act
 - The regional NRC rep. for the affiliate involved needs to be consulted
- Peiffer: VOTF policy stipulates that if certain things happen, bishops need to resign. If these policies are not going to be followed they should be replaced with more nuanced procedures.
- Mains: National should provide support to local affiliates, such as handling national communications, stipulating over-arching considerations, providing theological background and pointing out policy inconsistencies.
- Fox: VOTF needs a national strategy that collaborates with/supports local affiliates. VOTF is an organization of change and needs to be careful not to pre-determine specific responses that are not realistic and may be tough to implement.
- Pohlhaus acknowledged that in the early weeks of the Chicago situation there was a major communications breakdown due to the officer transition. She also said that input from the Chicago affiliates changed the opinions of the officers on this issue.
- DuBois called the discussion to an end on this issue by quoting from Tom Doyle' book "Sex, Priests and Secret Codes": "The time for angry confrontation is over." He suggested the book as a must-read.

President's Report – Mary Pat Fox (See report attached).

Discussion Points:

- Mains: NRC members should educate themselves on strategies for change.
- Joyce agreed, noting the March campaign training was all about this and those materials are still available.
- Wiggins: There was a bishop in the 1970s who called for a lay synod; lay involvement is not a new.
- Ed Wilson: It helps if bishops think the ideas are their own.
- DuBois: Affiliates need to keep sharing information on positive things happening, and NRC members need to familiarize themselves with the new by-laws to be approved on June 12.

- Fox suggested having affiliate members rotate in and out of conference calls so the officers get to know other members. She proposed starting these calls every month, then switch to every other month and share minutes so all NRC members will know what's going on. Mains said full minutes may not be needed but key ideas should be reported.
- Culleton: A reliable forum is needed to coordinate work of the NRC and officers. Kaintz said he is still confused about the relationship between NRC, BOT and officers. He thinks VOTF is a bottom-up organization, and again remarked about the communication involved in the "Chicago situation." Top-down decisions mimic the hierarchical church.
- Freeman: Her first conference call as an officer was on the Chicago issue, a difficult start.
- Peiffer asked when officers will inform NRC about actions they are taking and referred to the recent letter to Pope Benedict as an example. She said lack of communication marginalizes the NRC.
- Fox replied the officers don't operate in a vacuum and can fulfill their job responsibilities without having to consult with NRC on every decision they make.
- Judy Miller: VOTF President ought to consult with NRC on significant policy issues.
- Peiffer: Everything the NRC does is on the list serve for officers to view but NRC has no way to read what officers are doing.
- Vogt: There is no ownership of the statements/letters officers send if there is no advance consultation with NRC.
- Vance-Trembath noted her attempt to get to know council members, who they are and what they value. She agreed with the need for better communication with officers and the need to agree on a definition of "consultation." If there is too much consultation, however, nothing will get done.
- Friedl: Consultation should mean "touching base" with members; decisions don't necessarily have to be held up to do this.
- Merchant: Appearances matter and the lack of consultation gave the appearance of a lack of communication in the Chicago situation. Officers should let members know what they are doing in advance as a courtesy. Fox agreed the officers will do this in the future. Bartley suggested the officers add a notation to such communications asking if there are any strong reservations to the proposed action.

Point of clarification: O'Neal again questioned the right of meeting observers to comment during discussion. She noted most formal meetings maintain clear distinctions between being an observer and part of a deliberative body. She suggested there should be limited time for observers' comments but that they shouldn't have the same access to speaking as council members. DuBois said the steering committee could consider a change but confirmed that participation by all meeting attendees is a custom established from the beginnings of VOTF and from the Council that pre-dates the current one. O'Regan said O'Neal's question was addressed in the morning session and that her objections were out of order. Culleton suggested addressing any possible change in on-line discussions after the meeting.

Reports from the Executive Director (Ray Joyce) and Treasurer (Mary Freeman)

- a. **Finances Report:** Freeman distributed the Treasurer's Report, which included the FY '04 Actuals, FY '06 Forecast and FY '07 budget. She summarized an explanation of the handout, noting revenues are up 6.5%, expenses are up 6.5% and that for 2006 there will only be a deficit of \$1,000. Each representative received a handout specific to their region, as well as the Financial/Development Update for June 2006.
- b. **Development Report:** Joyce briefly reviewed the region donation statistics, noting that VOTF has more members in every region than last year. Since credit card donations were not included in the statistics of this report, he said, the total number of members is probably closer to 35,000. He said approximately 5,000 members contribute each year. In 2006, VOTF started to raise more money and to eliminate deficit spending. This was accomplished by making big cuts in national staff, and by assigning resources better. VOTF has lost most of its major donors (those giving > \$5,000) and must rely on direct mail for the

majority of its fundraising. This has made fundraising more expensive. There is also still confusion about people donating to affiliates instead of National. A donation to an affiliate does not go to National.

- c. Joyce distributed a handout: VOTF FY '07 Development Strategy and explained this, asking each leader to host one bulleted item and one event next year. He noted that the Cincinnati video gives a good overview of VOTF and would be a good recruiting tool for people to use at house parties.
- d. **IT Report:** Joyce reported all affiliate databases have not been merged yet. Some still must be added to the national database. National is using an outside firm for IT support and this is working much better than the previous vendor arrangement. He explained that National has one database of all members (Donor Perfect) and another for communications (Constant Contact). The databases work together but are not totally linked yet. They are still updating email addresses and are asking members to send new names to Alice Campanella, quarterly or twice yearly. Council reps. should use Donor Perfect to email affiliates to ensure that all new names from national are reached. Regarding the VOTF website: Joyce said that one of the several domain names we lease had expired. As a result, VOTF has to buy the votf.org domain name back from another person who bought it. This issue should be resolved soon. When it is, anyone using votf.net for this temporary bypass will be automatically redirected to votf.org.

Key Discussion Points:

- Wiggins requested that future editions of the Financial/Development Update show a net figure (revenue less expenses for each year) instead of the separated detail presented. Joyce reminded Representatives that the VOTF balance sheet is posted on the website monthly for review.
- O'Neal asked if any serious consideration has been given to charging dues for members. Joyce said a soft definition of membership is typical for non-profits. VOTF does four mail appeals per year and will be starting "supporter clubs" to inspire people to give more, but dues are not being considered.
- O'Neal asked why many dioceses don't have any affiliate representatives assigned. Joyce replied that there are "Area Coordinators" doing this, but they have asked not to be listed as such. There may be VOTF members in Iowa and Wisconsin that are not part of any affiliate so they are not listed as such. VOTF does not have affiliates in every diocese.
- Many questioned why bounce-backs are still occurring. Joyce asked why Representatives are not using DonorPerfect and asked if people would like Alice to call and walk them through using it. He said national needs feedback about how NRC communicates with members/affiliates.
- Peiffer: Representatives need to reach out to members with small reports occasionally to get feedback and so members know representatives are doing their jobs. Fox suggested National could do conference call to guide representatives through the Donor Perfect process or designate someone in particular areas to do this.

Strategy for Growth – Dan Bartley

Bartley gave a presentation on increasing membership that focused on increasing involvement first. Some of the points he made:

- a. Understand that people join VOTF for different reasons: they like the goals, or the mission or both.
- b. Make membership growth a priority. The potential for growth is in parishes.
- c. Aim of growth is to create vested members. Vested members are those who do something for VOTF at least once a month. They experience a sense of ownership and therefore they are more likely to mention VOTF in their conversation with others, and this person-to-person network grows members.
- d. Analyze activities by asking, What gets people involved? Choose those activities. Think creatively.
- e. Activities like petition drives, even if not successful in the short term, get people involved and help create structure, help people feel they have a voice.
- f. As a result of following these guidelines, Bartley's affiliate has added 300 new members in the past months. These are members fired up to take on the Church.

Discussion points:

- Suggestions were made to involve high school students in case studies/important topics such as church leadership.
- There are many resources available to use for activities such as Vatican II video series and Easter Sunday video of Tim Russert with Doyle and Cozzens. National was asked to put together resource list of good videos to promote VOTF membership.
- Joyce said all the growth efforts should be tied in as much as possible to the existing Accountability Now campaigns.

Motion to Define Membership Growth as VOTF Priority: Culleton moved that “*VOTF should define growth as a priority and appoint a committee to develop a strategy for membership growth.*” O’Regan seconded.

Discussion followed this motion and touched on the following: Is this needed? Was there way to grow membership as part of the Accountability Now campaign? Would this duplicate any work already done by staff? Support for membership growth will make achieving goals with bishops easier. Some expressed frustration about “feeling torn” in different directions. For some affiliates, growth was noted as a matter of survival; and approving a motion to support growth would not put other goals aside. Suggestions were made for the committee to add metrics for growth as a gauge of success/progress. Discussion closed and vote was taken: Vote was unanimous in favor.
Motion passed.

Report on Accountability Now – Tony Wiggins (See report attached)

Discussion points:

- Kaintz: Is CIT a permanent group? Fox replied CIT was meant to drive direct-action from the Convocation resolutions and move them to measurable results. If CIT did not exist she is not sure who would coordinate the campaigns. It’s possible as the FAA and LAA groups take on more responsibility, CIT can relinquish some of theirs.
- Peiffer: How many financial resources should VOTF put into CIT if the results are not significant (i.e. only 11 affiliates participating in Pentecost action)? Post said the idea for CIT came from people working on the convocation; it was derived from what members identified as key issues to work on. The dollars spent on CIT work is based on the stated priorities from the convocation and CIT is the task force driving results for 2007.
- Doucette: Are measurable results needed to get larger donors? Joyce said that is not the focus of the campaign. People want to see change and to know something is happening. He said staff wants to know if people are happy with the work of CIT. He knows many affiliates don’t want direct action and prefer education as a primary action. He needs to know if this would be better focus of their work.
- Chuck & Judy Miller: Many in affiliates are finding requests for mobilization burdensome. Joyce said no one is obligated to participate and if it’s too burdensome, don’t do it. Currently there are 50 affiliates participating in these campaigns. There was continued discussion about CIT’s work and whether NRC liked the way it is working or would like it disbanded.

The Saturday session was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Council members attended Mass and then met for an evening social.

Sunday, June 4, 2006

DuBois called the meeting to order at 9 AM.

Susan Vogt led the opening prayer.

Attending: All NRC members from Saturday with the exception of alternate, Janet Hauter.

Total NRC voting members: 22. The Officers attending did not take part in the meeting until 10:30 AM.

I. Election of two Council members to Board of Trustees

Peiffer reported that nominations from the NRC had been received and the statements from the four candidates distributed online. She explained that election would require a 2/3 majority of votes. All NRC reps. were asked to vote for two names with a run-off to be held if there was no clear majority.

The following members were nominated via statements listed on the listserv:

1. Dan Bartley
2. Donna Doucette
3. Ron DuBois
4. Jim Jenkins

O'Brien confirmed the names of the current trustees. Douglas asked for confirmation that the "election" of the four remaining trustees would take place as soon as possible after the make-up of the slate through the nominating committee is decided. Peiffer said the by-laws will be approved on June 12 and hoped the final vote to fill the four remaining positions would take place soon after. A secret ballot was held and the results were announced with Dan Bartley and Ron DuBois as the two NRC members of the BOT.

II. Report on SOL (Statute of Limitations) Resolutions – Frank Douglas (See Report attached)

Discussion points on SOL:

- The resolution included four statements about legislative initiatives. Three of the statements passed in the online voting on the resolution, but the fourth did not. There was extended discussion on why #4 did not pass. Opinions were offered pro and con in support of the statement. Those contributing to the discussion were Jenkins, Suzanne Lynch, Culleton, observer Chuck Miller, Friedl, Ed Wilson, Bennett, O'Regan, Lucy Abu-Absi, O'Neal, DuBois, Bretschneider, and Judy Miller. The arguments against were based on several factors: that it is bad public policy to expose individuals to criminal prosecution for unlimited periods of time; that there are too many cognitive flaws in old cases that can lead to mistakes in prosecutions, and that civil prosecution gives protection where criminal recourse is not available. The arguments in favor were based on issues of justice for survivors to tell their stories, the necessity for discovery, albeit decades later, to expose abusers, the desire to place VOTF on a footing with states like Maryland that have already allowed such legislation, the fact that only 5% of priest perpetrators have ever done jail time. (Discussion continued after a break to continue the elections process.)

III. Election of 2 NRC reps. to discuss slate to BOT

Peiffer invited nominations from the floor for two people to represent the NRC in discussions with two trustees in hopes of resolving the disagreement over the slate of four "at large" members to the Board of Trustees. Peiffer reviewed the text of the motion and the recording secretary, McElligott, reviewed the results of the vote on the motion.

Peiffer asked for nominations from the floor:

- Lucy Abu-Absi nominated Donna Doucette.
- Ed Friedl nominated Jane Merchant.
- Linda Mains nominated Bill Culleton.
- Bill Culleton nominated Ed Wilson and Linda Mains.
- Dan Bartley nominated Frank Douglas.

Those nominating explained the reasons for their nominations, and the nominees explained how they proposed to support the motion in their discussions with BOT. Since O'Neal had left the meeting at 10:45 AM to attend the Pentecost action at Holy Name Cathedral, McElligott confirmed a new voting total present of 21 NRC reps. The first vote was held with no clear majority but the nominees were pared down to Culleton, Wilson and Mains. A second vote was held with the following results: Culleton and Mains elected.

Continuing discussion on SOL Report:

- Next Steps – Douglas discussed the next steps needed for implementation of the resolution. One is concurrence by the Officers and BOT with the resolution. Douglas thanked Fox for mentioning extension of SOL in her letter to Pope Benedict. A de facto action plan with certain state legislative campaigns has been going on in some states for several years. Douglas also is working with others to produce a white paper to serve as a source document for legislative actions related to SOLs. The focus so far has been on three states: Maryland, Colorado and Ohio. The extensive discussion on resolution #4 indicates that perhaps this should be revisited. Mandatory reporting could also be considered. VOTF may also want to add a point person to work on a National Child Protection Act proposed by other organizations. Douglas will put the latest draft of this act on the Council discussion list for members to review.
- Culleton thanked Douglas for his work on SOL resolutions. DuBois concurred, noting Douglas doesn't just complain about problems but comes forward with suggestions for positive change.
- Fox: VOTF needs to take serious look at wording changes to avoid adverse effects on our 501(c)3 status. This is why the resolutions are not binding on affiliates. Peiffer clarified that the 501(c)3 concerns are strictly a monetary concern; as long as no affiliates are using their money to pay for lobbying work, there should be no problems with these IRS regulations concerning 501(c)3 status.

IV. Discussion on “Partnering”

Leading from the discussion on SOLs, Douglas pointed out how some partnering with other organizations already is under way, especially in the work on SOLs. VOTF has supported the efforts started by others and added their voices to those of other groups that have been working on legislation.

- DuBois: VOTF needs to put a lot more thought into how it will partner with other organizations.
- Pohlhaus: VOTF will have a booth at Call To Action convention in the fall.
- Fox: VOTF needs to stay focused on its goals; our strength comes from this. We don't necessarily want to subscribe to everything the groups we partner with say.
- Bartley: It may make sense to speak as a larger group if we agree in principle with a partner. VOTF might want to come up with endorsement language that limits VOTF liability for what our partners say. Several members concurred.
- O'Regan: VOTF doesn't control the policy statements of partners so our partnerships need to be very specific. Douglas concurred, noting our partnerships can be specific to certain initiatives.
- Freeman: What other groups can we partner with? Peiffer said there is huge potential to search out groups to partner with and worth researching. Other partnering groups were suggested.

Information Items:

- a. Peiffer announced there will be more information on-line concerning creating a committee on growth to respond to the motion passed earlier.
- b. The next NRC meeting is Nov. 10-12 at the Marianist Retreat and Conference Center in St. Louis. More details will be forthcoming on-line.
- c. DuBois facilitated a meeting debriefing to solicit final comments on the meeting.

Final Thoughts

As a “debriefing” at the end, Ron asked attendees to provide some feedback as to what they found helpful and positive about the meeting and then what they thought should be improved.

Among the positive elements named: meeting everyone, integrating prayer in the meeting, the layout and facilities, action reports, help with transportation, Friday night educational workshop, the overall spirit, the quality of the discourse, the liturgy, allowing observers to speak, the agenda, fruit with the snacks, the Saturday social, the presence of Board members and Officers, presence of local affiliates.

Suggestions for improvement: Communication with each other; more effective use of the listserv and better preparation so as to be ready to take action while here; representatives should come prepared; more printed materials and written reports; control speaking times with a clock; shorten (lighten) the agenda; have a microphone; take more breaks; allow for more “bonding” experiences; provide a list of files needed in advance; more participation of local affiliates; have the NRC strategize what it wants to accomplish - set a measurable goal.

The meeting was adjourned with a prayer at 11:45 AM.
Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie McElligott
Acting as Recording Secretary
Co-Chair, Joliet Affiliate VOTF