

1       **Concept Five**

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3       *Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority*  
4       *opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.*  
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6       Concept Four reminds us that fellowship voting privileges are allowed in proportion to each  
7       individual’s or group’s level of responsibility. Individuals vote in their meetings, delegates vote in  
8       the delegate meeting, and board members vote on issues at the highest level. Although we  
9       always seek unanimity, even the most diligent and respectful decision-making process will  
10      occasionally yield a result with which some members may disagree. Concept Five ensures that  
11      members and groups have the right to request that a decision they do not agree with be  
12      reconsidered; and further, that those who participated in making the decision listen and  
13      carefully consider the opinions expressed. This Concept serves to protect us from the harm that  
14      may be caused by an uninformed or misinformed majority.  
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16     The words “throughout our structure” indicate that the request to appeal a decision may come  
17     from any level of our fellowship: an individual, an intergroup, or a board member. “Minority  
18     opinion” and “personal grievances” encourage us to remember that each of our voices is  
19     important and worthy of being heard, even those voices that are speaking alone. For many of us,  
20     the COSA fellowship is the first place we dared to speak up without fear. For others, it may be  
21     the place where we finally found the courage to truly listen without judgment. When we give  
22     “careful consideration” to an appeal, we dedicate thought and reflection to it, and we do so with  
23     the same sincere interest and attention we would want given to our own plea. It must not be a  
24     token consideration.  
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26     By voluntarily honoring Concept Five and respecting the opinions and voices of those appealing  
27     a decision, we give the fellowship an opportunity for increased certainty and agreement. We  
28     strive to avoid making easy choices today that may turn out to be problematic in the future.  
29     Even when the minority voice does not change a decision made by the majority, those few who  
30     spoke out will know that they were not overlooked or cast aside. Whether we are approving  
31     new literature, amending our bylaws, or voting on the purchase of medallions in a small

32 meeting, Concept Five gives every minority, be it an individual or a group, the means of  
33 participating and being heard confidently and without shame.

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35 Those members or groups who believe an error in judgment was committed or a mistake was  
36 made have a right, and perhaps a duty, to share their views. In the same way that we practice  
37 rigorous honesty with ourselves as we work the Twelve Steps, our service to the COSA fellowship  
38 will be put in the best light when we employ the same principles of clear, truthful  
39 communication. Neglecting to exercise our right to appeal may end up depriving the fellowship  
40 of an opportunity to better carry the message to those who still suffer. While it may be difficult  
41 for some of us to share our opinions, especially if we are new to the fellowship, our moment of  
42 struggle in speaking out may be the start of a lifetime of peace for someone else.

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44 When we allow Concept Five to influence our service to the COSA fellowship, our families, and  
45 our work, the gifts of the program will spring to life not only for us but for everyone around us.  
46 Our active consideration of perspectives other than our own is living proof of our willingness to  
47 grow and collaborate for the greater good. We owe it to ourselves, and to each other, to  
48 encourage the sharing of opinions that differ from what is most popular or widely believed. Also,  
49 we must remain accountable for thoroughly examining those other viewpoints, inviting  
50 discussion when it is required for complete understanding. When it is necessary to reverse a  
51 decision, our human desire to be right should always yield to our spiritual need to do the right  
52 thing.

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54 As we reflect on Concept Five in our service to the COSA fellowship, our families, and our work,  
55 it may be helpful to ask:

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- 57 ● Do I encourage the sharing of opinions that differ from the majority?
  - 58 ● Do I go along with the majority even when it bothers my conscience?
  - 59 ● Do I gloss over minority opinions, giving them no more than a token consideration?
  - 60 ● Do I understand why it can be difficult for someone to speak up against a majority?
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62 The Fifth Concept suggests that we surrender fear and use our right of appeal to stand up to a  
63 majority that we oppose. It also suggests that we stand down and listen to the minorities in our  
64 midst to achieve true unity in our fellowship. Once an appeal has been heard, the final decision  
65 rests with the will of a Higher Power as expressed in our group conscience.

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