

## PETITIONS AND BALLOTING

Membership in the Order of the Eastern Star is not solicited. Persons eligible, through Masonic relationship, must express a desire to become members, and then, a member of the Order may secure a petition from the Secretary or Worthy Matron, to be filled out by the applicant and recommended by two members of the Chapter and submitted at a stated communication. When you sign a petition recommending a person for membership, your signature on that petition vouches for his or her character and reputation. Therefore, it is necessary that both signers know the petitioner extremely well. Casual acquaintance does not qualify anyone to recommend a person for membership.

The Order of the Eastern Star is a social organization designed to promote friendship and harmony among its patrons; to practice charity; to elevate character; to protect its members from aspersions, unkindness or injustice of others; to establish and keep the moral law as a rule and guide of conduct, and to aid and assist the Masonic Fraternity in all its good works. Any act or omission that offends against these declared rights is contradictory to our principles. The Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Chapter provide penalties for such offenses. We do not presume to be a reform organization. The good moral character of a person must be established before he or she is eligible for membership, regardless of his or her Masonic relationship. It is advisable to use extreme discretion in signing and submitting petitions, for what one person considers offensive, another may disregard. Thus care and caution are necessary. We aspire to quality, not quantity, in our membership. Every member of the Order should be aware of this responsibility. This will avoid rejection of petitions, which always causes heartache and sorrow, particularly to the signers who have recommended the petitioner.

When you know definitely that there is a reason--or reasons--why a petitioner is not eligible, it is advisable to go to the secretary before the petition is presented to the Chapter. She will then endeavor to protect the signers and petitioner by suggesting that the petition be withdrawn. If it has already been presented to the Chapter, it is your duty to go to the investigating committee and state your case. The committee can then thoroughly investigate the charges. A petitioner must never be rejected because you have only heard some unsavory things about him or her, nor for any personal dislike or differences. The question to ask yourself is "Do I know this or that about her, or did someone just tell me a malicious story? Have I seen this person do or say anything that conflicts with our moral code?" Vindictiveness, maliciousness and hearsay have no place in our Order.

If a petition has been received by the Chapter and approved by the investigating committee and you were unaware of the petition, and you have sound reason for rejecting the petitioner, it is not only your privilege to cast a black cube, but it is your duty to do so. Balloting is one of the most solemn acts of members of a Chapter. ~~That~~ One should approach the Altar with a renewal of his or her obligation, a prayer in your heart that you are voting for the good of the Order. The salutation sign is made to the Bible--not to the East--when balloting. There should be no visiting during the process of the ballot. Penalties are provided by the Grand Chapter for discussion pertaining to an unfavorable ballot. We must not engage in conversation regarding the ballot with anyone, either in or out of the Chapter room.

By Myrtle Smith  
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