

Rights and their Responsibilities

Ray Soltis

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Presented by Right Worshipful Gerald L. Frey, District Educational Officer, District 14

As Master Masons we have a number of rights, yet we are all too often not educated in the use of these rights, or more importantly our responsibilities when exercising them. One of these is the right to vouch for a Brother, when entering a Lodge or vouching for them as a candidate. What are these responsibilities in vouching for a Brother and equally critical for a candidate?

When vouching for a candidate it is much more than a quickly scrolled signature on the back of a petition. That signature indicates you know the individual and are vouching as to his honor, character, and integrity. Getting it right is a benefit to all Masons, however getting it wrong does no good for any Brother. Vouching for a candidate can take two forms, orally in Lodge before those that will ballot or in writing. Faint praise or worn statements will not assist in the process of the ballot.

There are five items that must be covered to vouch for the candidate:

1. How long have you known the petitioner?
2. Describe his family life?
3. Has he a church affiliation and activities, if any?
4. What are his business and civic activities?

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5. What other pertinent information outlines his honor, character, and integrity?

Answering these five questions requires knowledge and background of the candidate on a personal level. The Lodge wants to know the reasons why he should be allowed to become a Mason. After all they only have your word, the word of a Master Mason, on which to cast their ballot, remembering “it is the internal and not the external” qualities of a man, which are important to the Craft. Failure to answer these questions fully could well end in the membership not considering the candidate for the degrees in Freemasonry. All that stands between the candidate and membership is your sincere knowledge of his character. You are the person vouching for him and endorsing his membership into the Fraternity.

The responsibility to investigate petitioners by a committee is equally responsible to the Craft in general and the Lodge in particular. Perhaps the first or certainly a primary question for the investigation committee must be, does the candidate “believe in a Supreme Being.” Should the answer be in the negative, all further investigation is meaningless, indeed fruitless. Sadly, too often this is the end of the investigation. Or is it? Every Master Mason of the Lodge is responsible for the investigation of the candidate, all candidates. We are instructed that a ballot cast cannot be questioned or exposed. Why then would we cast a ballot without taking the time to get to know the candidates for ourselves? Each Master Mason is responsible for guarding and protecting the West Gate. This responsibility, this right, cannot and must not be taken lightly or performed shabbily. Our future depends upon it. While numbers for membership are important, quality is even more important to the furthering of the Craft now and in the future.

None of us are perfect, stand back from pre-judging, prejudice, and narrow mindedness. We are looking to the future of someone we will call Brother, doing so with confidence

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and a peaceful heart does the Fraternity proud. It also gives us the ability to face ourselves and our community, knowing our rights were exercised in accordance with the high standards that is Craft Masonry.