

Suspension vs. Demit

Edward Tooma, PHP

There comes a time in one's life when it might become necessary to make a decision regarding what to do and what not to do when it pertains to membership in Freemasonry. Personally, it saddens me to hear of anyone giving up his membership, but if it must be done due to personal reasons, etc., it should be handled in accordance with the guidelines of the Digest and/or other methods as stated in jurisdictional rules and regulations.

If at any time, you find that you are no longer interested in belonging to a Craft Lodge or an appendant body, the Masonic way to end your membership would be (while in good standing) to request in writing a demit (honorable withdrawal). However, you can only be granted a demit if your dues are currently paid up for the current year when making the request. Think of a demit as a safeguard, so to speak, should you decide later to petition for reinstatement. The demit process is much easier as compared to a suspension, which should be avoided at all costs. To be reinstated for membership after a suspension for non-payment of dues (N.P.D.) varies from one jurisdiction to another, includes applicable compliance with the bylaws of the Order concerned, and in most cases could very well require paying of back dues. This is a complex course of action. Additionally, a member who is suspended is not entitled to a Masonic funeral.

Here are a few ground rules to remember regarding suspension. The most important rule to remember is never to be suspended, especially when you have the opportunity for an honorable withdrawal, but if this

course of action happens you should be aware of the following:

If an active Blue Lodge member becomes suspended from an appendant body, does it affect his Lodge membership? The answer is no. However, a Brother who is suspended from his Blue Lodge not only loses all of his Masonic rights and privileges, but also is suspended from any and all appendant body memberships.

Let us say that a Blue Lodge member decides to demit in good standing. In doing so, he can still visit a Lodge up to six months after the issuance date, and then he becomes a non-affiliate if he does not join another Lodge. What if the same Brother that took a demit from his Blue Lodge belonged to an appendant body? What happens? The member would then have to relinquish his membership. The entire process can be tricky administratively, but not to worry. When in doubt your secretary can clarify and/or get the answer(s) from the "powers to be."

The golden rule to always remember is that your Blue Lodge membership is the rule and guide to all other memberships within our overall institution. You would be surprised how many Masons are not aware of how the suspension vs. a demit process works.

Being candid, I was not fully clear on it myself and that's why I decided to search for the answers to give us all more light on this subject. I wish to thank Alan Wayne Adkins, PGM, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge, AF&AM, of Virginia for his most valuable input. Take this information and present it as a program one evening. Knowledge is Power - Use it! So Mote it Be!