

CHAPTER 31

CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREES

As to Fees for the Degrees, see Chapter 32
As to Petition for the Degrees, see Chapter 33

QUALIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Constitutional Provisions

Every candidate for Freemasonry must be a man, free born, of lawful age, being under the tongue of good repute, and well recommended, and, unless Dispensation is granted by the Grand Master, having no maim or defect of body that may render him incapable of learning the art or of being advanced to the several Degrees. (1992) (Art. XIII, Sec. 2(g))

Regulations

31.01 Every candidate for Freemasonry must be a man, free born, of lawful age, being under the tongue of good repute, and well recommended, and, unless Dispensation is granted by the Grand Master, having no maim or defect of body that may render him incapable of learning the art or of being advanced to the several Degrees. (1991)

31.02 It is a safe rule in these days, though its antiquity may be greatly doubted, that a candidate should be able to read and write.

31.03 A Lodge may not receive a petition for the Degrees of Freemasonry from any person who has been convicted of a felony and who has not been restored to full civil rights.

31.03.1 A Lodge may not ballot on a petition until the Investigation Committee (formally referred to as the “Character Committee”) has reviewed a criminal background investigation. (2009)

Rulings and Decisions

This Grand Jurisdiction imposes no citizenship restriction on candidates for the Degrees in Freemasonry. (1942 Proc. 43)

Lodge may receive petition from applicant who is not yet a citizen of the United States. (1953 Proc. 48)

E.A. Brother Initiated forty-nine (49) years ago and now desirous of finishing his Degrees at age of seventy (70) must be treated as a non-Mason. (1952 Proc. 34)

Member of defunct clandestine Lodge is ineligible for affiliation with Florida Lodge, but may receive Degrees in usual course after renunciation if Lodge so elects. (1952 Proc. 45)

Justifiable homicide in defense of mother is not a bar to petitioning for Degrees of Masonry. (1946 Proc. 38)

A Lodge cannot require a petitioner to submit a recent photograph. (1947 Proc. 33)

The laws and decisions of the State of Florida provide that absent of fraud a man has the right to choose a name under which he will be known and designated and if petitioner has, without fraud, adopted a name other than his real name and held himself out by such name to the public for a long period of time, such name is his legal name although no court action was taken to legally adopt such name, and petitioner, if accepted by the Lodge, may have the Degrees of Freemasonry conferred upon him under the name which he has chosen and by which he is known. (1959 Proc. 52, 164)

Lodge may receive petition for Degrees of man convicted of felony provided Lodge has evidence of restoration of petitioner's civil rights. (1965 Proc. 196, 200)

Petitioner disclosed conviction of aggravated assault but Lodge received petition, balloted favorably thereon and conferred Entered Apprentice Degree. Progress of candidate should be suspended since crime of aggravated assault is felony under state law and action of Lodge was contrary to Regulation 31.03. Upon proof that candidate has been restored civil rights progress of candidate may be resumed. (1973 Proc. 63, 344)

A petition for the Degrees or visitation of an otherwise duly qualified visiting Mason may not be objected to by a member of a Particular Lodge if the objection is based upon the grounds of race, creed, or color. (1993 Proc. 123)

Just as a candidate for Freemasonry must be a man, so it follows that to remain a Mason, he must not become a woman or portray himself as a woman. This portrayal may be by gender change, name change, identification, attire, or accouterment. (2008 Proc. 106)

A dark ballot cast based solely on a Candidate's race, creed, or country of origin shall be found CLEAR, and the Candidate shall be Initiated, Passed, and Raised WITHOUT OBJECTION unless a valid objection is forthcoming. (2008 Proc. 107-108)

All Petitions requiring an investigation and a ball ballot, with the exception of a Petition for Plural Membership or a membership transfer from one Florida Lodge to another, require a Background Check. (2009 Proc. 121)

"Full" civil rights means without exception. For a man who has lost his civil rights and then had them restored, the restoration must include all civil rights. This restoration, therefore, must include "the right to bear arms." (2009 Proc. 120)

PHYSICAL**Regulation**

31.04 The Lodge, under the supervision and direction of the Grand Master, is the judge of the physical qualifications of a petitioner to receive the Degrees of Freemasonry.

If at any time prior to receiving the Entered Apprentice Degree, there is any indication that a petitioner has or suffers some physical disability or handicap which could cause him to be physically disqualified to receive the Degrees, the proceedings shall abate and the Worshipful Master shall appoint a fact-finding committee of three (3) members of the Lodge, one (1) of whom shall be a Past Master of the Lodge, to investigate the matter of physical disability or handicap of the petitioner, and make written report to the Lodge thereof as soon as practicable, which report shall include information necessary for the Lodge to determine the eligibility of the petitioner to receive the Degrees. Upon receipt of the report of the committee, the Lodge shall vote by secret written ballot, and shall determine whether or not the petitioner is physically qualified to receive the Degrees. If the Lodge, by majority vote, determines that the petitioner is physically qualified, the Worshipful Master and Secretary shall forthwith request that the Grand Master approve the action of the Lodge and grant Dispensation for the Lodge to continue the proceedings.

If the Grand Master approves the request of the Lodge by Dispensation, the Lodge may continue the proceedings. If the petitioner is or has been elected to receive the Degrees in Freemasonry, the same shall be conferred upon him and the petitioner shall comply with the requirements of the Degrees only to the extent of his physical abilities to do so.

If the Lodge, by majority vote, does not determine that the petitioner is physically qualified or the Grand Master refuses his Dispensation for the Lodge to proceed, his fee shall be returned and he shall be notified that he was not rejected, but physically disqualified to receive the Degrees in Freemasonry. (1991)

Rulings and Decisions

Slight physical deformity does not bar petitioner for Initiation and Lodge is judge of physical qualifications of petitioner. (1942 Proc. 47)

A Lodge is the sole judge of applicant's physical qualifications where no maim is involved. (1954 Proc. 74)

It would be highly improper to confer the Degrees of Freemasonry upon a substitute for a candidate because the candidate is personally incapable of conforming literally to the requirements of the several Degrees. (1959 Proc. 53, 164)

Regulations

31.05 If a candidate has received the Entered Apprentice Degree and, prior to receiving the Masters Degree, it shall appear that he does not meet the physical qualifications, the Lodge shall nevertheless, continue the proceedings in a manner as near as possible to the prescribed requirements. (1991)

AGE

Regulations

31.06 A Lodge may receive a petition for the Degrees before the candidate is full 18 years of age, but the ballot must not be spread, or the E.A. Degree conferred, before the 18th birthday. (2008)

References

Lodge may waive jurisdiction over man under age. Reg. 34.04

Rulings and Decisions

Petitioner, age 68, sound of mind, slightly deaf, but otherwise in good health should not be considered in dotage because of age alone. (1946 Proc. 34)

Lodge is sole judge of qualifications of 73 year old applicant. (1952 Proc. 31)

Lodge may receive petition of man close to 70 years of age but petitioner will not be eligible for Masonic charity. (1953 Proc. 46)

RESIDENCE

Constitutional Provisions

The Grand Lodge, shall, by Regulation uniformly applicable to all Lodges prescribe, define, and regulate the jurisdiction of Lodges in regard to accepting and receiving petitions for the Degrees, administering Masonic justice, and for all other purposes. (Art. X, Sec. 17)

Regulations

31.07 Art. X, Sec. 24 of the Constitution has no reference to

applicants over whom a Lodge has once properly assumed jurisdiction and elected to receive the E.A. Degree.

31.08 Every applicant for the benefits of Masonry must have resided twelve months within the state and six months within the jurisdiction of the Lodge to which he applies; except active duty military personnel who have resided in the state and within the jurisdiction of the Lodge for ninety (90) days. (2012)

31.09 A Lodge shall determine the qualifications of every petitioner as to residence on the basis of two factors:

1. Actual physical presence of the petitioner in the State for twelve (12) months, and within the jurisdiction of the Lodge for six (6) months; except active duty military personnel who have resided in the State and within the jurisdiction of the Lodge for ninety (90) days, and, (2012)

2. The intent of the petitioner to remain in such jurisdiction permanently.

These factors are to be considered without regard to the fact that petitioner may be in the military service or pursues an occupation which requires frequent absences from the jurisdiction of the Lodge.

Residence is established by actual physical presence of the petitioner in the state for twelve (12) months and in the jurisdiction of the Lodge for six (6) months, coupled with an intent on the part of the petitioner to make such place his permanent home or is on active duty in the military and is stationed in the state and the jurisdiction of the Lodge for a minimum of ninety (90) days. (2012)

In order to establish residence by such physical presence accompanied by such intent, a person must be of lawful age. The best evidence of a man's intent as to his residence is what he says relative to such intent but other evidentiary factors should be considered, such as purchase of a home, claim of homestead exemption, registration for voting, the signing of legal papers as a resident, and other similar matters, none of which are conclusive as to such intent, but all of which shall be considered in determining the matter of intent. Temporary absence from such place of residence on business or for reasons of health does not prevent a petitioner establishing residence in the jurisdiction of the Lodge, if he returns to such jurisdiction as his home and intends that such place shall be his permanent home or residence.

31.10 Temporary residence of petitioner does not give the Lodge jurisdiction.

The tests to be applied in determining the residence of petitioner are:

1. Has he resided within the state for twelve (12) months and within the jurisdiction of the Lodge for six (6) months; unless he is on active duty in the United States Military and has he resided in the state and jurisdiction of the Lodge for ninety (90) days, and, (2012)

2. Has the petitioner remained in the State of Florida, and in the jurisdiction of the Lodge for such periods of time with the intent that such place shall be his permanent residence.

If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, petitioner is a resident within the jurisdiction of the Lodge and the Lodge may accept his petition.

31.11 Students residing temporarily within the territorial jurisdiction of a Lodge who have not acquired a Masonic residence, in accordance with our Laws, within such jurisdiction, are not eligible to petition for Initiation.

31.12 When a Lodge lawfully assumes original jurisdiction, it cannot be rudely divested thereof; therefore, no Lodge can lawfully finish work begun by another surviving Lodge without its consent. Jurisdiction may be waived over a candidate elected to receive the Degrees, but not over E.A.'s and F.C.'s who may request a dimit or Transfer Certificate per Regulation 41.01. (1985)

31.13 When a petition is presented for the Degrees, if there should be any question of jurisdiction, a committee should be appointed to investigate and report before the petition is received by the Lodge.

31.14 Pending the settlement of a dispute between two Lodges as to territorial jurisdiction over a petitioner who has received the Entered Apprentice Degree in one of them, the progress of the candidate must be arrested until the jurisdictional question shall be finally determined.

31.15 A Lodge may receive the petition for the Degrees of a person who has been rejected by another Lodge of this Grand Jurisdiction more than six months previous to his petition, if at the time he resides out of the jurisdiction of the rejecting Lodge, and has continuously resided for the last six months in the jurisdiction of the Lodge to which he petitions, and the last twelve months in this Grand Jurisdiction; but inquiry should be made of the rejecting Lodge if it knows any reason why the applicant should not now be made a Mason. (1995)

References

When a candidate moves from jurisdiction of Lodge after his petition has been received, the Lodge retains jurisdiction. Reg. 33.07

The Lodges in Florida must respect the jurisdiction of Lodges in other Grand Jurisdictions. Reg. 25.33

Rulings and Decisions

Lodge does not lose jurisdiction by absence of man for period of eighteen (18) months due to work for government in Washington. He may receive E.A. Degree in Florida Lodge and other two in Washington. (1941 Proc. 78)

Man who moves from Jacksonville to Waycross on January 2, 1951, and back to Jacksonville March 19, 1951, should be considered as temporarily out of jurisdiction and Jacksonville Lodge could accept petition. (1952 Proc. 29)

~~Temporary residence in Lodge jurisdiction while in military service does not divest Lodge of petitioner's original residence of jurisdiction and Lodge in which petitioner was temporarily residing during military service could not receive petition. (1942 Proc. 50) (Repealed 2012)~~

Florida Lodge has jurisdiction over man who formerly resided in jurisdiction of Lodge and is now in the armed forces but claimed home within the jurisdiction of the Florida Lodge. (1952 Proc. 29)

Petition of applicant being at sea most of majority years but claiming to be a resident of Florida since 1918 may be received after petitioner has permanently resided in jurisdiction of Lodge for six (6) months. (1947 Proc. 33)

Investigator for F.B.I. who has no permanent home can not be balloted on short of twelve (12) months residence. (1946 Proc. 33)

~~Sailor who became of age while in Navy with no permanent address since discharge must reside in Florida twelve (12) months and in jurisdiction of Lodge six (6) months before petition can be accepted. (1947 Proc. 32) (Repealed 2012)~~

~~Petitioner born in Florida was minor when he enlisted in Army must reside in jurisdiction of Lodge six (6) months before petition can be received. (1947 Proc. 34) (Repealed 2012)~~

Applicant must reside in jurisdiction of Lodge for six (6) months before petition can be received. (1946 Proc. 34)

Lodge has no jurisdiction over merchant seaman living in all parts of the country at different times. (1952 Proc. 33)

Petition received from man having no fixed residence is irregular. Proceedings should abate and fee returned to petitioner, advising him that he was not rejected but that Lodge action was irregular in receiving his petition. (1943 Proc. 75)

Employee of State Road Department living in Lodge jurisdiction only four (4) months after having worked year in another community in the state is not in class of one whose vocation is such that he can not establish a fixed residence and, therefore, must live in jurisdiction of Lodge for six (6) months until his petition can be received. (1942 Proc. 48)

Where petitioner lives nearer to other Lodges than the one he petitions, it is not necessary to secure waiver of both such Lodges but only to secure waiver of jurisdiction of Lodge having jurisdiction. (1946 Proc. 38)

A man formerly in jurisdiction of Florida Lodge but now in Oklahoma but unable on account of traveling job to establish residence of jurisdiction in Oklahoma is eligible to petition Florida Lodge. (1952 Proc. 32)

Lodge jurisdiction over a non-Mason ceases instantly when he permanently moves out of its jurisdiction. (1942 Proc. 46)

Lodge retains jurisdiction of candidate who files petition before moving from jurisdiction. Lodge should act on petition in usual way and candidate as approved is entitled to receive the Degrees in or by request of that Lodge. (1950 Proc. 69)

~~A service man who is a bona fide resident in jurisdiction of Lodge is eligible to petition for the Degrees. Ownership of home and registration for voting are evidence, but not required evidence of residence. (1956 Proc. 48) (Repealed 2012)~~

Residence is determined on the basis of two factors, (1) actual physical presence in a community, and (2) an intent on the part of a person to remain in the community permanently. In order to establish legal residence by such physical presence accompanied by such intent, a person must be of lawful age because a minor does not have the power to establish residence separate from his parents. Physical presence of a petitioner for the required period of one year in the State and six months in the

jurisdiction of the Lodge is of course easily determined, but it is the element of intent that is sometimes troublesome. The best evidence of a man's intent as to residence is what he says relative to his intent, but other evidentiary factors may be considered such as purchase of home, claim of homestead exemption, registration for voting, the signing of legal papers as a resident of a particular place, and other matters, none of which are conclusive but all of which should be considered in determining the matter of intent. (1959 Proc. 59, 164)

Applicant for Degrees must meet residence requirements or waiver of jurisdiction must be obtained from Lodge having jurisdiction. (1967 Proc. 75, 211)

Jurisdiction of Lodge over non-Mason is not lost because of temporary residence in jurisdiction of some other Lodge and if applicant petitions a Lodge other than Lodge having jurisdiction, waiver of jurisdiction must be obtained from Lodge having jurisdiction. (1967 Proc. 75, 211)

When a petitioner who is rejected by Lodge in concurrent jurisdiction with other Lodges and subsequently moves out of said concurrent jurisdiction and establishes residence in jurisdiction of another Lodge for more than one year and thereafter returns to and establishes residence in the concurrent jurisdiction of the Lodge originally rejecting him, such petitioner has the status of a new citizen and any Lodge in the concurrent jurisdiction of the Lodge originally rejecting him may receive his petition without necessity of waiver of jurisdiction. (See Rulings and Decisions on Page 159, Digest 1963) (Page 174 Digest 1969) (1968 Proc. 56-57, 212)

PREVIOUS REJECTION

References

As to effect of previous rejection, see Chapter 36

WAIVER OF JURISDICTION

References

See Chapter 34

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Constitutional Provisions

The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Florida hereby recognizes, as being Landmarks of Freemasonry, the following:

- (a) A belief in the existence of one ever living and true God.
- (b) A belief in the immortality of the human soul and a resurrection thereof to a Future Life. (Excerpt Art. XIII, Sec. 2)

Regulations

31.16 Belief in God is the only religious prerequisite of a candidate for Initiation into Masonry, but a Mason is bound by his tenure to obey the moral law.

31.17 Since Communism does not have faith in Deity and is contrary to all the principles and purposes of Freemasonry, it is unlawful for any Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction to accept the petition for or confer any of the Degrees of Freemasonry upon a Communist or upon anyone actively supporting the purposes thereof.

CANDIDATES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Regulations

31.18 Any person belonging to a Foreign Grand Jurisdiction not in fraternal relations with The Grand Lodge of Florida, who desires to become a member of a Florida Lodge, must first renounce his allegiance to such Foreign Grand Jurisdiction and take the same course as any other non-Mason.

31.19 If any Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction receives a petition for the Degrees which shows that the petitioner has been rejected in a Sister Grand Jurisdiction, then such petition must be submitted to the Grand Master for his attention and action before any action can be taken by the Lodge.

References

As to Balloting on Candidates, see Chapter 35

As to Fees for the Degrees and Refunds Thereof, see Chapter 32

As to Background Checks, see Reg. 31.03.1

Rulings and Decisions

Member of unrecognized Lodge must be treated as a non-Mason and must renounce former jurisdiction. (1941 Proc. 80)

Lodge may accept certificate of dismissal from another Grand Jurisdiction presented by E.A. Brother as dimit. (1947 Proc. 32)

When request for waiver of jurisdiction over rejected material is declined by another Grand Jurisdiction, petition should be returned to petitioner without any Lodge action. (1955 Proc. 133)

A man made a Mason in a Grand Jurisdiction not recognized by The Grand Lodge of Florida may petition a Florida Lodge for the Degrees of Freemasonry, and if he makes full and complete renunciation of his allegiance to the unrecognized jurisdiction in which he was made a Mason, the Lodge may accept the petition and upon favorable ballot the applicant may be Initiated, Passed, and Raised as if he had never been made a Mason in the unrecognized jurisdiction. (1959 Proc. 58, 164)

A member of a clandestine Lodge may become a member of a Florida Lodge by renouncing in writing his clandestine membership and applying to Florida Lodge for membership as a non-Mason and being accepted for membership by the Florida Lodge. (1960 Proc. 120)

Rejected candidates from the Grand Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania can not be accepted by Florida Lodge without waiver of jurisdiction because Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania asserts perpetual jurisdiction over all rejected material. (1960 Proc. 130)

Member of Lodge of Grand Jurisdiction not recognized by Grand Lodge of Florida who desires to petition Florida Lodge shall first renounce his allegiance to such unrecognized Grand Jurisdiction and after such renunciation petition for Degrees takes usual course. (1967 Proc. 75, 211)

Florida Lodge upon obtaining, through office of Grand Secretary, waiver of jurisdiction from Lodge of foreign Grand Jurisdiction having jurisdiction of applicant may proceed to receive petition and, on favorable vote, confer Degrees on applicant without regard to time of residence in Florida. (1967 Proc. 330)