

What It Means When You Sign A Man's Petition

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Signing a man's Masonic petition is much like signing a legal document or contract. So let us think about contracts for a minute. Almost everything you buy, sell, borrow, loan, rent, repair or trade involves some type of documentation or contract. This is a legal agreement between two or more parties and should be well drafted to capture what is intended. Then, before it is signed, it should be carefully read and understood to ensure there has been a meeting of the minds.

Using this contract analogy, it is clear that the petitioner should carefully read and understand everything in the petition and understand also what it means to join the Masonic Fraternity.

For his part, a Brother who signs the petition must ensure that all the blanks are filled in, but there is much more to their job. He has both a responsibility to the Lodge and to the petitioner.

First, he needs to be sure the petitioner understands what Freemasonry is all about and that he is joining for the right reasons. Members of the public tend to know very little about our Fraternity, and much of what it does know is incorrect. There are many, many books on Freemasonry and a great deal of information on the Internet, but it is hard for the non-Mason to readily distinguish the good from the bad, the truth from the fiction. As a result, a petitioner may harbor many misconceptions about our Fraternity and needs to learn from well informed Brethren the basics of Freemasonry

before he signs his petition. This cannot be emphasized too much because, if the petitioner does not really understand what Freemasonry is all about, and is unaware of its requirements and obligations, both the petitioner and the Lodge will be wasting a great deal of time and effort.

Second, the Brother signing the petition should be well acquainted with the petitioner before adding his signature. It is true that there will be an investigating committee, but the signers are personally vouching for the petitioner and certifying that they believe he is well qualified to become a Master Mason. This is their responsibility to the Lodge.

Being well acquainted with the petitioner means that, as you read the answers to the questions contained in the petition, you are confident that they are true. You should know whether he has Masonic residence in the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Virginia for the proper period of time. You should know whether the petitioner is morally and physically qualified, of good character, and under tongue of good repute.

Essentially, when you are signing a petition you are answering in the affirmative the following questions about the man.

1. Does he have a belief in a Supreme Being?
2. Is he loyal to his country?
3. Can you confidently trust him?
4. Is he willing to become a part of Masonry for its principle tenets, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth?

5. Is he willing to join Masonry to become better equipped to serve and become a part of his Church and community?
6. Is he willing to spend time with a group of Brothers, who by acting as good men, will make him a better man?
7. Is he willing to give support, as well as to seek it?
8. Is he joining to meet outstanding individuals from all walks of life?
9. Does he have time to participate, and can he afford the initiation fees and annual dues without hardship to himself or his family?

Being able to affirmatively answer these questions should satisfy you that he is a proper candidate for the degrees in Freemasonry, and that he is joining Freemasonry for the right reasons. On the other hand, if you cannot honestly say yes to these nine questions, or if you believe that he is seeking membership in Masonry in the hope of personal gain or advancement, then you should decline to sign the petition.

Thus far, we have spoken about the voucher's responsibility to the Lodge, but he also has a responsibility to the petitioner as well. To be able to fulfill that responsibility, he needs to be able to answer in the affirmative the following two questions. Am I willing to attend the degrees for the man whose petition I am signing? And, am I willing to be a Mentor and guide as he begins his journey in Masonry?

Let me conclude by saying that, if you, as a voucher, will fulfill these obligations to the petitioner and to the Lodge, you will be doing a great service to Freemasonry. You will help to guard our reputation by helping to guard the West Gate, and you will be assisting a man to join an organization

that will have real meaning and play an important role in his life. But there is something in it for you as well. As a result of the relationship you will develop with the petitioner, you will have many happy memories and thoughts of the times spent together in Lodge, and he will become your friend and Brother for life.