

A Plan for the NPD Problem

NPD stands for Non Payment of Dues. There are several things a Lodge may do to work with this problem, but the most important thing is to have programs and activities that are so good that members simply do not want to drop their membership. That aside, here are two concepts that Lodges might try.

The first one is to make contact with the NDP member as soon as possible. This should be done in person so that problems can be identified and the Brother knows that he is missed. If a letter is sent instead, it should be worded carefully. Here is a letter that has been used successfully:

NPD letter

"Dear Brother,

"I have just learned of your recent suspension for non-payment of dues from your Masonic Lodge and I am personally concerned.

"I would ask that you recall your own thoughts at the time you knelt at the west side of a Masonic Altar and became a Master Mason. Many opportunities are made available to us when the door of knowledge has been opened. It has been said that thoughts lead to purposes and purposes lead to action.

"As you reflect on these thoughts, I'm sure you will recall many of our great Masonic teachings. They are Freemasonry's gift to you and, with them, comes hope that you, too, will be willing to give.

"In committing yourself to the Lodge, you did not simply become a member of another social organization, but rather a supporter and believer in the Masonic ideal of 'a life well lived.' This commitment is, and of right, ought to be, a lifelong commitment, worthy of our pride and support.

"If you have fallen on hard times, I want to do all that I can to maintain your membership in our fraternity. Please let me know the reasons why you are unable to pay your Masonic lodge dues, and these reasons will be given careful consideration by your lodge."

"Whatever you do, my brother, please keep this thought in mind. You may be only one of millions of brethren, BUT YOU ARE A BROTHER, and as a BROTHER, YOU are important to me."

Your brother,

[insert name, phone, address here]

Chairman

Lodge membership committee.

Or

Lodge Secretary / Lodge Worshipful Master

Secondly, we may have to change the way we think about NPDs. The new thought on the subject is to send them a dues card anyway with the word “inactive” stamped across the front. Here is that proposal for the future:

A Proposal

This proposal concerns a program to reduce NPDs while retaining contact with those brothers who for any reason have decided to not pay their dues. A number of non-profits and businesses have adopted this concept and have found it to be successful. The idea is to re-classify NPDs as inactive members. They would be issued a dues card each year with the word INACTIVE stamped across the front. A note would accompany the card indicating that the bearer of the card is entitled to a Masonic Funeral but no other Masonic privileges. A note would also request that the inactive Brother consider bringing his dues up to date there by becoming an active member once again. Perhaps a limit of two to three years in past dues could be placed on a re-activated member.

This status would allow continued contact with the inactive member who would still receive newsletters and fund raiser money requests. It would allow an easy way for the Brother to re-join and there would be fewer hard feelings toward the Lodge who suspended him. Lodges would not pay the yearly Grand Lodge assessments on these Brothers and would have continued contact with them for future re-activation programs. “Once a Mason always a Mason”. The inactive brother might actually be a positive ambassador for the Craft.

The Minneapolis Star and Tribune keeps sending the newspaper and bills to any subscriber who stops paying. You have to call them directly to unsubscribe. If an “inactive” brother wishes to be taken off the mailing list he would need to fill out a demit.

AAA uses this concept in their business. They never suspend members for non-payment but continue to send them notices and newsletters. When a former AAA members’ car breaks down he often calls AAA for assistance. He is told that his membership has expired but he can take care of that instantly by giving a credit card number and thus bringing his membership up to date. They then immediately send out assistance. Doing the same, Masonry would leave the door open for a former member to activate his membership when:

- He wishes to be the top line signer for a family member or friend
- He wants to join the Shrine or other appendant organization
- His financial problems are over
- His friendship with his Brothers improve

Lodge Secretaries may have a difficult time making the change and some may not agree with the idea. The program may take a few years for all Lodges to comply with the concept. The program is certainly a change in our attitude toward our NPD members, but the benefits far out distance the costs.