

“Is He Worthy and Well Qualified?”

## Duties of the Investigating Committee

Issued by the Committee on Masonic Education of the  
Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F&AM of California, Inc.



### Investigation The Responsibility of the Master

The Master of the Lodge has the responsibility to appoint an investigating committee when the Lodge receives:

- a petition for initiation
- a petition for affiliation
- a petition for advancement
- a petition for dual or plural membership
- all applications for reinstatement after suspension for more than three years for nonpayment of dues

The Master shall appoint the investigating committee immediately after reading of the petition with the direction that the committee submits their report at the next regular communication, but no sooner than the 28<sup>th</sup> day after the petition or application has been received. If any Investigating Committee shall fail, or be unable, to submit a report at the next regular communication following their appointment, they shall be discharged and a new Investigating Committee appointed to report at the next regular communication thereafter. If an Investigating Committee requests more time to investigate a petitioner, the Master of the lodge may grant such additional time to report.

Selection of the committee needs to be in accordance with Blue Lodge bylaws and must consist of no less than three Master Masons. In the case of a petition for initiation, the top line and second line signers of the petition may not serve on the Investigating Committee. Care must be taken to pick the right men to take on this important task. They are the guardians of our portals. In America today, people are moving constantly because of their work, etc., and it behooves the committee to check out the applicant's record in each locality in which the applicant has resided or worked. This investigation requires the appointment of committee members who will not treat their duty as a mere formality. Their report should be honest and fearless and is, of course, to be known to no one outside the Fraternity. It should be constantly remembered that the result of the ballot is often primarily dependent on the committee report. The committee's report is often the only direction members have in balloting of the new candidates. The future of your Lodge rests squarely on the quality of the new members that are accepted!

### Duties of the Investigating Committee

The investigating committee's duties are twofold. The first and most important duty is to

investigate the eligibility of the candidate, his character and his fitness for membership. The second duty is to give the candidate and his family a positive first impression of the fraternity, provide general information about Masonry and answer questions about Masonry.

Appointed committee members should not sign the report until the investigation is complete. Once all members of the committee have completed their investigation, the findings should be consolidated and the report completed.

Investigation should begin immediately so that enough time is taken to be fair to the candidate and the Lodge. The committee should contact the candidate to arrange a meeting with him and his family. This meeting should include all the appointed committee members. If the candidate seems hesitant to invite the committee into his house, arrange a meeting at the Lodge. This will give the committee an opportunity to show the candidate and his family the Lodge itself. The interview should be friendly and promote dialogue with the candidate and his family. Any questions that the candidate has about Masonry should be answered, if the answers do not violate the obligations.

The following specific facts should be ascertained of each candidate. Be sure the candidate understands our basic requirements:

1. BELIEF IN A SUPREME BEING – To become a Mason, a man must believe in a Supreme Being. This does not mean he must be Christian. Masons are of various beliefs and religions. No other religious test may be given.
2. AGE – The candidate must be at least 18 years at the time of his signing of the petition and must not be in his dotage (i.e., feebleness of mind).
3. JURISDICTION – The candidate must have resided continuously within the jurisdiction of the state to which he petitions for the six months immediately preceding and at the time his petition is received by the Lodge. A member of the military does not lose his residence while in service.
4. OCCUPATION – The candidate's occupation may be a guide to his character. One engaged in an unsavory or unlawful occupation certainly would not be good material for Masonry. However, there are no legal occupations that are identified by the Grand Lodge that would make a candidate ineligible.
5. PRIOR PETITION – If the candidate has previously petitioned this Lodge, check the result of the first petition and verify that the required six months has elapsed from date of ballot to the date the new petition was received. If the candidate had petitioned another Lodge, that Lodge has three years jurisdiction over the candidate.
6. DOES THE CANDIDATE KNOW OF ANY REASON HE CANNOT BECOME A FREEMASON – The results of this question could bring out mental reservations concerning the Craft or information about the candidate that may require further investigation.
7. FREE WILL AND ACCORD – A man must apply of his own free will and accord. The candidate should not be put under any undue pressure. This does not mean that the

candidate cannot be asked to become a Mason. This is fundamental and if the man has been under pressure of some nature, it should be ascertained before, not after, he receives the degrees, both for his benefit and that of the Craft.

8. **FINANCIAL ABILITY AND SPECIAL BENEFITS** – The candidate should have financial potential and ability to pay his fees and dues. He must understand that he will not receive personal advancement; either financial or otherwise, from his membership and that the Lodge is not an insurance, burial or relief society for him or his family. He should also understand that his acceptance is entirely up to the Lodge by unanimous secret ballot and there is no obligation to accept him or give any reason for non-acceptance.
9. **CONVICTION OF FELONY OR MISDEMEANOR** – The conviction of a man for a felony or misdemeanor does not automatically disqualify him for membership, however, the severity of the charges need to be considered when making a recommendation of a candidate for membership. Also, if the candidate answers no to this question on the petition or application and further investigation reveals information to the contrary, the investigating committee should strongly weigh the omission in their decision to give a favorable or unfavorable report. It is acceptable for a lodge to choose to obtain public records criminal history checks on potential candidates. Many services are available online for a nominal fee; the full name, address and date of birth are needed for most checks.

## **Concluding the Investigation**

After checking the above information with the petition and the questions and answers submitted with it, the investigating committee may want to contact the Brethren who signed his petition for further investigation and references. If necessary, the committee could pursue further investigation, remembering that the candidate's petition for Masonry is not public information.

Any rumor casting discredit on his integrity, morals or record should be thoroughly investigated. It is the only method by which each member of the committee may determine for himself the report he will make.

## **The Report**

The report consists of a favorable or unfavorable response in the space provided on a candidate's petition. There is no further documentation either written or oral required. The report may be made by a majority of the committee. The nature of the report shall not be a matter of record in the Lodge minutes.

Finally, do not hesitate to make an unfavorable report if there is any reasonable doubt in your mind that the candidate is not qualified in every respect to make a good member. Keep in mind that it is not the intent of Freemasonry to reform any man, but rather it is our hope to help a worthwhile man improve himself.

Always bear in mind that, as a member of an investigating committee, you are selecting the material which will in the future make the structure of our organization strong or weak.