



Retaining Our Fraternal Brothers: How to Avoid Suspension

As members of the Knights of Columbus, we are part of a large fraternity of like-minded men. We all know the tenets of our Order – charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. All are important, but in the area of retention, extra effort is often needed to retain brothers who no longer are engaged in our activities fraternally.

The reasons are many – too numerous to discuss here. Still, we have the obligation to administer the financial needs of our council in that members who do not pay their lawful dues are a burden to others. Each council's retention committee is charged with the responsibility to ensure all members are current with their dues. Alternately, if a member has encountered a severe problem that does not allow for his payment, these dues should be waived or delayed in payment until a reasonable time has elapsed to allow the member to become current.

Strategies When Contacting Delinquent Members

The following ideas are important when making contact to members who have fallen away. None is more important than the other. Remember that the person contacting their brother Knight is doing so as a fraternal brother – they are not a bill collector!

1. Ensure that your financial secretary's records are up to date and that anyone showing with dues in arrears is truly delinquent. Be aware that recent payments may have crossed in the mail.
2. Make the contact! This sounds simple, but many retention committee members are simply not comfortable with performing this task. Remember that you are representing your council and that you are merely doing what needs to be done. This is not a personal indictment about your fellow brother.
3. When possible, approach brothers face-to-face and do so cordially. Here's an example:
"Hey Joe, good to see you! I've been meaning to call you. I was notified that you have not paid your dues to the Knights for this year. Is the correct or do I need to check on this for you?"
4. When calling by phone, use a friendly voice – you do not have the luxury of using body language and a cordial handshake! Remember, you are not a bill

collector – in fact, you are more of an information-gatherer who is checking on your fraternal brother. Consider this approach:

“Hi, is Steve there? Steve, this is Bob with the Knights. How’s it going? I haven’t seen you in a while, is everything going ok for you? How’s your wife? Well, the reason I’m calling is that we are trying to close out the books for the Knights and we saw that you haven’t paid your dues for this year. Is this correct?”

5. Depending on the responses you get, make good notes. If your brother Knight says he is going to pay, determine when and note it. You may wish to say the payment needs to come in by the end of the month, etc. **THANK HIM FOR TAKING CARE OF THIS AND INVITE HIM TO THE NEXT MEETING OR EVENT!**
6. If your brother is in need, note this as well. Tell him you would like to bring this to the attention of the Grand Knight and other officers to see if dues can be waived or reduced. When our brothers are laid off, ill, or in other bad situations, we do not want to suspend them. Every effort should be done administratively to ensure this brother is taken care of on at least a temporary basis. **THANK HIM FOR LETTING YOU KNOW HIS SITUATION AND TELL HIM YOU OR ANOTHER BROTHER WILL BE IN CONTACT. INVITE HIM TO THE NEXT MEETING OR EVENT!**
7. Follow-up timely if a promised payment has not arrived. Again, with a friendly voice, explain you are helping to close out the books for this fraternal year and that we need the payment by a certain date. If something unfortunate has happened, be compassionate and make notes to discuss with the Grand Knight and others later as necessary.
8. Work with your financial secretary and Grand Knight to ensure all steps are being covered in the necessary timeframe if a suspension is necessary.
9. This is an every year event. Never should councils fail to address this part of membership. It is unacceptable to let this go for several years and then process a large number of suspensions because guys have moved away, are no longer attending the parish, or whatever else.
10. Suspension is not the main purpose of a retention committee! The committee and officers should always be looking at ways to engage members in activities, degree advancement, or church and community programs. Involved members are generally going to pay their dues and not be subject to suspension.
11. Communicate! Let your district deputy and state retention director know about any problems you may be having. There should be no surprises! If you are solving a membership problem that was left for you by others, address the issue,

let others know, and also help the membership director with a plan to increase new members who will help you compensate for the loss of others.

Summary

There is no magic pill to take to make members comply with their duty to pay dues! Remember we are performing a necessary task and doing so out of a spirit of brotherhood. We are looking for a way to get the member current on dues, but more importantly, addressing any concerns or issues they may have and trying to get them involved back in the council!

