



THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE  
OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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June 1, 2020

**Edict: Pandemic, States of Emergency and or another Major Calamity**

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2020 Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared a state of emergency due to the outbreak of the 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19),

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization,

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2020 Governor Charles D. Baker prohibited gatherings of more than 10 people and subsequently issued several additional orders to the residents of Massachusetts thereby restricting our fraternity the ability to meet,

WHEREAS, we as citizens are under the authority of varying degrees of restrictions by local law as well as state and federal law,

NOW, THEREFORE, I hereby issue the following process for continuing the business of Freemasonry during a declared pandemic, state of emergency or another major calamity restricting the crafts ability to meet freely.

I believe in the autonomy of our institutions and the importance of letting our leaders lead. To that end, effective immediately Masonic activities within the Jurisdiction may resume subject to all local and state laws and guidance set forth from applicable government agencies. You must follow all laws that affect your body or building. To everyone in position to make the decision as to how your body will move forward, I strongly urge you assess your membership and put the wellbeing of your members above all else.

Effective immediately I issue a jurisdiction wide dispensation for all lodges to meet in June, July and or August (subject to state and local law) either in person on your regular meeting night and or by online meetings. If you are meeting online, it should be on your regular night. I am issuing a Jurisdiction wide dispensation for additional meetings as well to conform to your yearly schedule if desired.

Exemplification for this year is cancelled.

Lodge of Qualification may be done in basic form by 3 or more Past Masters of the Lodge. The only requirements are the following: Due-Guard and Sign of all three degrees and the Grand Hailing Sign, Due-

Guard and Sign of the Chair, Grip, and word of the Chair. This may be done verbally if the current social distancing requirements do not allow personal contact to complete all.

Rookie and Master Builder Award members in process are hereby allowed to reset the clock to one year from when we may meet under “normal” conditions (in person lodge meetings resume).

Candidate investigations may resume. Since the courts are still closed, background checks are delayed. Have candidates sign their application indicating they have not been convicted of a felony. Background checks should be reinstated as soon as available from the Court System.

I now authorize the use of online meetings as a substitute and or addition to regular communications with strict rules and guidelines. Meeting must be private and “tiled”. Due notice must be given. Complete minutes must be taken. Online meetings must also be accessible by phone for the benefit of those who do not have computers.

**Allowed online:**

- Use special Grand Lodge provided opening and closing ritual (available on MassMasons.org).
- Regular business may be conducted.
- Candidates may be read.
- Approval of regular invoices (including those traditionally approved yearly such as scholarships, charity donations etc. unless conditions have changed).
- Correspondence may be read.
- Installations allowed but discouraged.
- Minutes may be read and approved.
- Lodge of Instruction (Specific Candidate instruction such as cipher work should be in a separate online room with only the candidate and instructor).
- Annual Meeting.
- Override by-laws only for the purpose of “timing” for certain items as Nominating Committee Reports, Annual Meeting, Elections, Installations.

**Not Allowed online:**

- Ballot on Candidates or Affiliates.
- Degrees.
- Grips, words, signs, and secrets.
- Expenditure of funds outside of regular budgeted amounts.

Full Lodge votes will be required for election of officers, expenditure of capital funds and or any expenditure contemplated to be considered outside the normal everyday expenses of the lodge or building. Traditionally approved items such as scholarships and charitable donations etc. may be approved online without a full lodge vote unless conditions have changed. No member’s vote shall be disenfranchised. Whatever your by-laws require you will need to obtain that as a percentage of your full membership (if working online). You may accomplish this by online voting, email, phone or by USPS (plain envelope by USPS will suffice for a secret vote for officers).

- Election of Officers is still by secret ballot.
  - Publish the Nominating Committee’s report in your notice. Include a ballot that the members may fill out and mail (or email) back.

- If anyone has an issue with any of the nominations, they can write in an opposing candidate for an elected office. Publish a deadline for submission of write-in nominations. Otherwise the secretary may cast one ballot for the uncontested offices.
- If you get a write-in nomination, then you must have a second election for the contested office by issuing a new ballot listing both candidates, same process (except no new write-ins).
- **Suspensions**
  - You can vote to suspend during on-line meetings providing the following is observed. Only Lodge Members are in the meeting, no visitors, set up a waiting room and have the “Tyler” or meeting administrator admit them.
  - List in the notice that you will be voting to suspend delinquent members.
  - As the names of those to be suspended are not published in the notice but are read in open Lodge, inform those that are not able to attend online meeting that they may contact the Master or Secretary in advance to receive the list by phone or email.
  - If they have any issues, let them know that they can call the Master and make their opinion known.
  - Establish a cut-off date several days prior to the meeting to address any concerns and or write-in nominations by the Brethren.
  - Keep track of call-in and e-mail votes as well as the vote in the online meeting.

**This edict will serve as a guide for all future pandemics, states of emergency and or other widespread calamity that may impair gathering of our members.** This edict does not apply when society is back to “normal” and is subject to revision. All rules and guidelines from Grand Lodge and the state of Massachusetts will be available on MassMasons.org and at the Grand Lodge. Out of state jurisdictions should follow their government rule. The health, welfare and safety of our members should be your rule and guide.

#### **Follow Reason**

Cordially and fraternally,



Grand Master

RM/jno