
RENEWING TEMPLARY ESTABLISHING ACCOUNTABILITY BY REVISING SECTION 176

The Opportunity We Face

During a 2023 Department Conference, the Grand Master, Sir Knight David J. Kussman, noted that there were several Grand Commanderies which were unable to confer the Orders because they lacked Knights capable of conferring the Orders. This has led to the untenable and unsustainable situation where candidates for the Orders are required to have the work conferred in other jurisdictions or the Orders are conferred not from memory but from reading the work from the Ritual book. While the former is certainly preferable to the latter, it is clearly in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of Section 176 of the Constitution, Statutes, and Decisions of the Grand Encampment, to wit,

***Section 176.** A Commandery that fails to hold a Conclave for twelve consecutive months, or to knight a single candidate within such period, shall be placed on probation for the period of one year, and if thereafter it fails to hold a Conclave for the next twelve consecutive months or to knight a single candidate within such period, its Charter may be arrested.*

Section 176 is ambiguous in that it does not specify several key points:

- a. What defines the “period of one year”? Is it a calendar year, Templar year, or rolling 12-month period?
- b. What defines “knight a single candidate”? Is the knighting to be done in the Asylum and under the charter of the Commandery, or is it acceptable to have the work done in another Commandery as a courtesy or in a festival setting with a large number of candidates?
- c. If the terms of the probation (defined in Croft Decision 1970-3 to be whatever terms specified by the Grand Commander) are not met, and the Charter is not arrested, what happens next, especially since the next Grand Commander is not bound to the actions taken by his predecessor?

Why We Should Revise and Expand This Section

This presents us with several opportunities. One is the opportunity to clarify Section 176 to remove any ambiguity. This will be addressed elsewhere. Another opportunity is to address methods we might invoke in order to encourage greater study and proficiency in our Ritual work, ensuring that every Commandery, and thus every Grand Commandery, has the ability and the resources to create new knights which we so desperately need if we are to reverse the downward trend in membership and provide those new knights with the high quality ritualistic work to which they are entitled and we have long claimed is a core principle of our being the “premier Masonic body.” It is this opportunity addressed here.

What A Revised Section 176 Might Be

Current Section 176. *A Commandery that fails to hold a Conclave for twelve consecutive months, or to knight a single candidate within such period, shall be placed on probation for the period of one year, and if thereafter it fails to hold a Conclave for the next twelve consecutive months or to Knight a single candidate within such period, its Charter may be arrested.*

Proposed New Section 176:

176.1 *Each Commandery shall confer upon an active candidate for the Orders each of the Orders of Knighthood in its own Asylum and with a majority of stations filled with members of its own Commandery at least one (1) time during each Grand Encampment reporting year (1 January through 31 December).*

176.2 *The dates of the conferrals shall be reported in the Annual Report of the Commandery.*

176.3 *Each Grand Commandery shall report any Commanderies which were not compliant with Section 176.1 in the Annual Return of the Grand Commandery, identifying if the Commanderies reported were placed on probation by the Grand Commander or action of the Grand Commandery in conclave.*

176.4 *Each Grand Commander shall, in cooperation with the Commander of a Commandery failing to comply with Section 176.1, prepare a plan of action for the Commandery to complete as part of the probationary process to become compliant with Section 176.1.*

176.5 *Should a Commandery fail to complete the probationary terms within 12 months, the Grand Commander may, at his discretion, extend the probationary period an additional 12 months. A Commandery which fails to comply with Section 176.1 after a second probationary year may be consolidated with a neighboring compliant Commandery. If the Commandery is not consolidated, the Grand Commander shall report in writing to the Grand Master, through his Department Commander, the reasons for not consolidating the Commandery and the explicit plans to ensure compliance before the completion of a third probationary year. A Commandery which is non-compliant after three probationary years shall be consolidated with the nearest compliant Commandery or its charter arrested.*

176.6 *This section also applies to Subordinate Commanderies, with the assigned Department Commander for oversight and any actions required by Sections 176.3, 176.4, and 176.4 which are otherwise assigned to the Grand Commander of a Grand Commandery.*

By expanding the details in Section 176, we put some teeth into the issue of accountability, as well as establish a measurable standard for Commandery compliance. Commanderies need to report on their work. Grand Commanderies have some guidance on how to help Commanderies improve. There is accountability to the Grand Encampment, and the Grand Encampment leadership then has information in hand to assist in working with the Grand Commanderies and Commanderies to grow and strengthen. Subordinate Commanderies are under the oversight and assistance of the appropriate Department Commander, who acts on behalf of the Grand Master.