

Subject: Executive Order Number 72

2020 - 2021 District Deputy Grand Masters:

Please disseminate this message to your Worshipful Masters, Secretaries and other Masonic email groups.

I wanted to touch base and briefly explain the planned response to Executive Order Number 72 and the modified Stay At Home Order. I will follow this email with a more detailed, formal communication next week.

As has been the case since day one, the EO does not specifically address fraternal and civic organizations. It has been suggested by some there are exceptions or exemptions within the order that may apply to us giving some leeway with the 10 or less requirement. I sought counsel from one of our well informed Brethren, an attorney, and he basically said that while there may be a place or two where we could try to make an argument, the reality is, if challenged for noncompliance, or, if someone contracted the virus or worse, we could find ourselves in a position of jeopardy. We will, therefore, follow the language found under item B-Other Restrictions, All Public and Private In-Person Gatherings thereby following the 10 or less rule. Furthermore, this reinforces the overarching priority we have followed since March, health and safety first.

Following the previously established health and safety protocols as well as the guidelines and restrictions set forth in previous communications from me, Lodges can continue to operate following the 10 or less rule, i.e., stated communications, catechism practice and the like. Things will obviously be limited but at least we're not shut down. Still, no called work at the Lodge level and no ritual practice involving personal contact. Fundraisers, building rentals and any event involving the public are strongly discouraged at this time.

The election and installation of officers will have to be delayed until February and we will, of course, set aside the law and make any reasonable adjustments we can to accommodate all of this. I am in consultation with the Grand Lecturer to develop a path forward.

The One Day Conferrals following the previous rule of 25 will, unfortunately, have to be postponed.

The virus has gotten worse and clearly has us in a rough place at the moment. Please encourage your Lodges and Brethren to be extremely careful in all they do. We all love our Gentle Craft but lets not sacrifice our health for something that can wait to a later time. We will get to the other side of the pandemic and once again enjoy fellowship in our Lodges.

More to come next week. In the meantime, email myself, the Grand Secretary or RW Terry Hilton with any questions you may have. When in doubt, common sense should rule and guide the day.

Thanks for your service and leadership in these challenging times. I'm proud to serve with each of you. Be safe and stay well.

Fraternally, Brother Doug
Most Worshipful Douglas V. Jones
175th Grand Master of Masons in Virginia