Proposed Voting and Credentials Clarifications

Grand Chapter of New Mexico Order of the Eastern Star
Jurisprudence Committee

Introduction:

The Jurisprudence Committee has reviewed questions arising from the administration of the all-member voting provision adopted in 2022, together with the existing provisions governing chapter representatives, proxies, and Credentials reports. The Worthy Grand Matron must ascertain that a quorum is present before opening Grand Chapter under Article I, Section 2, of the Bylaws Governing Grand Chapter. Constitution Article VI bases that quorum on representation of a majority of subordinate chapters. Article IX, Section 2(c), of the Grand Chapter Bylaws also requires Credentials to enumerate the chapters and the total vote of each.

Article IX, Section 1(c) and (d), places questions of Eastern Star law and usage, and the codification of adopted amendments, within Jurisprudence's duties. The Committee proposes Items 1, 2, and 3 as limited clarifications under the respective housecleaning authorities, subject to Grand Chapter approval. The Jurisprudence Committee's purpose is to preserve one personal vote per member, clarify the existing proxy requirement in the specified dual-office situation, and identify the person, chapter, and capacity supporting each entry in the Credentials record. These proposals do not rewrite Constitution Article VI or establish a primary-chapter-only requirement for ordinary plural members.

Housecleaning authorities: Constitution, Article XV, Section 1, p. 11; Grand Chapter Bylaws, Article XIV, Section 1, p. 21; Subordinate Chapter Bylaws, Article XXVII, Section 1, p. 53. Each proposed clarification requires a motion and two-thirds approval of the delegates present and voting at Grand Chapter.

1 One personal vote per member

Constitution, Article V, Section 3, Number of Votes (p. 3).

Issue. Multiple memberships, offices, or titles must not result in additional personal votes.

Current wording

> Members of the Grand Chapter, who are present, shall be entitled to one (1) vote each and one (1) vote for each proxy held by them.

Proposed revised wording

> Members of the Grand Chapter, who are present, shall be entitled to one (1) vote each and one (1) vote for each proxy held by them. **Each member's personal vote shall be counted only once, regardless of the number of chapters to which the member belongs or the offices or titles held. Holding an office or title does not confer a vote in addition to the member's personal vote. Additional votes may be exercised only through valid proxies held in accordance with the governing provisions.**

Rationale. The existing provision gives each member present one personal vote and permits additional votes through valid proxies. This addition makes that distinction explicit without changing voting entitlement or the quorum requirement.

2 Holder of the required dual office proxy

Bylaws Governing Subordinate Chapters, Article XIX, Section 6(d), Dual/Plural Membership (p. 39).

Issue. Clarify that the brother in the specified primary and dual/plural WP/AP arrangement must assign the required proxy to someone other than himself.

Current wording

(d) Dual/Plural members must pay dues to each chapter and shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of membership in each chapter. Dual/Plural members may hold elective offices in each chapter at the same time, except they cannot be elected to the office of Worthy Matron or Associate Matron in more than one (1) chapter at the same time. If a Brother is elected to the position of Worthy Patron or Associate Patron in a primary and Dual/plural chapter in the same year, the Brother shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the office in his dual/plural chapter except a Grand Chapter vote. The Worthy Patron or Associate Patron in his dual/plural chapter will assign a member of the chapter to carry the proxy for that position to Grand Chapter. Dual/Plural members must pay the five dollars ($5.00) for the International Headquarters Fund for the secondary chapter when they become members.

Proposed revised wording

(d) Dual/Plural members must pay dues to each chapter and shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of membership in each chapter. Dual/Plural members may hold elective offices in each chapter at the same time, except they cannot be elected to the office of Worthy Matron or Associate Matron in more than one (1) chapter at the same time. If a Brother is elected to the position of Worthy Patron or Associate Patron in a primary and Dual/plural chapter in the same year, the Brother shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the office in his dual/plural chapter except a Grand Chapter vote. The Worthy Patron or Associate Patron in his dual/plural chapter will assign a member of the chapter to carry the proxy for that position to Grand Chapter. **The officer giving that proxy shall not designate himself as its holder.** Dual/Plural members must pay the five dollars ($5.00) for the International Headquarters Fund for the secondary chapter when they become members.

Rationale. The existing provision withholds the specified dual/plural office's Grand Chapter vote from the brother personally and requires a proxy for that position. The addition makes clear that he cannot assign that required proxy to himself. Article XXVI, Section 4, already requires the holder to be a member in good standing of the chapter represented.

Housecleaning authority: Subordinate Chapter Bylaws, Article XXVII, Section 1 (p. 53).

3 Chapter voting totals and the quorum record

Bylaws Governing Grand Chapter, Article IX, Section 2(c), Registering and Credentials (p. 17).

Issue. Credentials needs a clear record supporting each chapter's voting total and the chapter representation used to establish quorum.

Current wording

(c) To prepare and present an initial report and a final report. The initial report shall enumerate the chapters and total vote of each entitled to vote in this Grand Chapter whose registrations are complete at the presentation of the report. The final report shall enumerate only such additions as have been filed since presentation.

Proposed revised wording

(c) To prepare and present an initial report and a final report. The initial report shall enumerate the chapters and total vote of each entitled to vote in this Grand Chapter whose registrations are complete at the presentation of the report.

For each chapter, the report shall separately state the number of personal votes recorded under that chapter, the number of valid proxy votes recorded under that chapter, and the total voting strength. Each member's personal vote shall be counted only once in the total voting strength of Grand Chapter, and each valid proxy shall be counted only once under the chapter represented by that proxy. The initial report shall also identify the distinct chapters represented for purposes of the quorum prescribed by Article VI of the Constitution, counting each such chapter once. The Committee shall maintain a record of the members, capacities, and credentials relied upon to establish that representation.

The final report shall enumerate only such additions as have been filed since presentation.

Rationale. The existing provisions require a chapter-based quorum and a Credentials report listing each chapter's total vote. This addition identifies the components of each total, prevents duplicate counting, and documents the members and credentials supporting chapter representation. It does not determine which chapter receives an ordinary plural member's personal vote.

Supporting provisions: Grand Chapter Bylaws, Article I, Section 2 (p. 1), and Article IX, Section 2(a)–(c) (pp. 16–17); Constitution, Article V, Section 3, and Article VI (p. 3). Housecleaning authority: Grand Chapter Bylaws, Article XIV, Section 1 (p. 21).

Future legislation

Jurisprudence recommends that legislation be presented next year to clarify which chapter records an ordinary dual/plural member's one personal vote and which dues cards support that entry. Establishing that procedure falls outside these housecleaning clarifications. Guidance was provided to Credentials this, but it is recommended that clarification through legislation be pursued next year.