

Opinion on Proof of Lineage
Ed Norris, PCinC - National Counselor
September 22, 2022

Commander-in-Chief Bruce D. Frail requested an Opinion regarding the validity of the proof of lineage requirement which appeared as a footnote in the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations document. After review, the addition of the footnote in the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations was an overlooked error. The footnote has been removed, as not being valid.

It is the opinion of the National Counselor that the Commander-in-Chief, using the authority granted him by the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations, has the power to restore the requirement of proof of lineage documentation, which was accepted by and clearly was the intent of the 132nd National Encampment and subsequent National Encampments. Additionally it is the opinion of the National Counselor, that the Commander-in-Chief directs the Program and Policy Committee to prepare the needed changes to the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations and submit then to the Constitution and Regulations Committee for consideration at the next National Encampment for formal approval. The Program and Policy Committee should also prepare a contingent Form 3 – Membership Application with the appropriate proof of lineage instructions.

Comments below by the National Counselor will be in *italics*.

Research

The following were reviewed to determine the validity of the proof of lineage requirement:

- Charter, Constitution, and Regulations
- 132nd National Encampment (2013) Proceedings
- 133rd National Encampment (2014) Proceedings
- 134th National Encampment (2015) Proceedings
- 135rd National Encampment (2016) Proceedings
- 136th National Encampment (2017) Proceedings
- 137th National Encampment (2018) Proceedings
- 138th National Encampment (2019) Proceedings
- 139th National Encampment (2020) Proceedings (not released, in final edit)
- 140th National Encampment (2021) Proceedings (not released, in final edit)
- Form 3 – Membership Application

Footnote in the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations, Page 36

²² Each applicant shall provide proof of lineage for each generation, back to the qualifying ancestor. DIR 132nd, 86. (*DIR - Directive adopted by a National Encampment*)

132nd National Encampment (2013) Proceedings, Page 81

Ed Norris, Department of Massachusetts [*Chair of the National Encampment's Officer Reports Committee*]

All right. We're gonna move on to the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief recommendations. These are on page 8. Number one. That the National Organization require proof of lineage for each generation back to the qualifying ancestor or ancestors for new membership applications. Not requiring proof likely happens back to the time when our members were literally sons of veterans. However, most members are now several generations removed from their qualifying ancestors. Majority of the hereditary societies require the proof of lineage, requiring proof will make our Order more respectable among hereditary societies as well as ensuring that applicants actually do have the required lineage rather than just taking their word for it. We refer this to the incoming administration for more detail on the program.

Perley E. Mellor, Commander-in-Chief
Any discussion?
[one rap, *]

Perley E. Mellor, Commander-in-Chief
So moved

The National Encampment's Office Reports Committee recommended referring it to the incoming administration. The National Encampment voted to accept the Committee's recommendation. Therefore the National Encampment didn't actually vote to adopt the proof of lineage requirement. (At the Post-National Encampment Council of Administration Meeting, Commander-in-Chief Ken L. Freshley assigned the work to the Program and Policy Committee.)

133rd National Encampment (2014) Proceedings, Pages 76, 77, 149

Tad D. Campbell, Program and Policy Committee
Commander, Tad Campbell, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, chairman of the Program and Policy Committee. Our report can be found on page 29, 30, and 31. And we have two recommendations that appear toward the top half of page 31. Recommendation number one, that a special National committee be created and instructed to adequately explore the following items as recommended by the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief in his final report to the 2013 National Encampment and subsequently passed by the same National Encampment, to wit: one, requirement of proof of lineage for all new members; two, formal recognition of supplemental ancestors; and three, a database of members' ancestors and that such Special National Committee report back to the 2015 National Encampment with recommendations for implementation of these items and thence be duly discharged.

Ken L. Freshley, Commander-in-Chief
Any objections?

George L. Powell, Past Commander-in-Chief
Commander-in-Chief, George Powell, Department of Pennsylvania. Just a question. What is a supplemental ancestor?

Tad D. Campbell, Program and Policy Committee
I have thirty-nine qualifying ancestors for this organization.

George L. Powell, Past Commander-in-Chief
Still, what is a supplemental ancestor?

Tad D. Campbell, Program and Policy Committee
If you're familiar with how the DUV, the DAR, the SAR, they work. They allow you to formally recognize additional qualifying ancestors. It usually costs the member money, so it's actually a money making thing for us. If they want to formally recognize an additional ancestor, they pay additional fee, additional paperwork and such.

George L. Powell, Past Commander-in-Chief
Thank you.

Ken L. Freshley, Commander-in-Chief
No objections? Passes.
[one rap, *]

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4.3- NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PROGRAM AND POLICY, Tad Campbell, Sr Vice CinC

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The following items were removed from the committee's list of tasks:

- Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Recommendations

Review and make recommendations regarding the outgoing JVCinC Tad Campbell's recommendations regarding: 1) proof of lineage; 2) formal recognition of supplemental ancestors; and 3) database of members' ancestors. These recommendations were passed by the 2013 National Encampment and directed to the P&P Committee for recommendations on implementation. They were removed as an action item by P&P Chairman on June 2, 2014. The P&P Committee had neither the time nor the resources to conduct adequate research required for well thought out recommendations regarding the implementation of these items (see Recommendations section of this report).

The Program and Policy Committee stated they neither had the time nor the resources to conduct adequate research required for well thought out recommendations regarding the implementation of the three items, which includes the proof of lineage requirement. The Program and Policy Committee recommended the work be sent to a Special Committee. The National Encampment didn't vote on the proof of lineage requirement, but voted to send it to a Special Committee for action at the next National Encampment. The Special Committee on Hereditary Issues was created.

134th National Encampment (2015) Proceedings, Pages 241-243

5.13 Special Committee on Hereditary Issues, James G. Ward, PDC
I. Goals and enabling objectives
A. Advance and/or strengthen achieving the SUVCW mission

- B. Better link generations from Applicant/Brother to Union Veteran Ancestor with qualifying service
- C. Create an “ancestor with qualifying service” database
- D. Create a process for Brother’s to acknowledge more than one Union Veteran Ancestor with qualifying service when that pertains.

II. Facts and Opinions

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F2. The SUVCW requires lineage “proofs” (reference 1).

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V. References:

1. SUVCW Constitution and Regulations

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III. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: exercise a “best practices” prototype for “proving” genealogical descent from an ancestor with SUVCW qualifying service.

- a. Outgoing C-in-C Campbell recommend incoming C-in-C appoint a hereditary issues special committee chairman with authority to appoint committee members
- b. ’15-’16 SCoHI obtain an off-the-shelf (non-proprietary) internet-able secure computer system capable of documenting and storing applications and proofs.
- c. ’15-’16 SCoHI invite Brothers, beginning with both ’14-’15 and ’15-’16 SCoHI members and ’15-’16 PC-in-C’s to provide applications and documents that “prove” genealogical descent from an ancestor with SUVCW qualifying service.
- d. ’15-’16 SCoHI publish the best practices for “proving” genealogical descent no later than NE16 as a supplement or replacement for current application processing guidance.
- e. ’15-’16 SCoHI invite SUVCW Camps (with Department coordination) to participate in a “hereditary” certification process that ultimately leads to high confidence that both type one and type two genealogical errors are minimized throughout SUVCW.

Recommendation 2: establish a database for “proved” genealogical descent from ancestors with SUVCW qualifying descent.

- a. ’15-’16 SCoHI ensure obtained computer system is database capable, and is “searchable.”
- b. For participating members in good standing, ’15-’16 SCoHI enter in the database both original ancestor with qualifying service as noted on the original application form, and additional ancestors with qualifying service, using the same application form required for initial application and printing “supplemental” at the top of the form.
- c. Compare this hereditary database with the SUVCW Graves Registration database and report what, if any, coordination between the two would advance the SUVCW mission.

The Special Committee did not address the proof of lineage requirement as the footnote was already in the Constitution and Regulations. The footnote was added in the edition which was amended through the 133rd National Encampment. The Special Committee stated that fact in their report, “The SUVCW requires lineage ‘proofs’” Two of the Special Committee’s recommendations were for resources to track proof of lineage. But, a National Encampment still hasn’t voted to approve the proof of lineage requirement.

Subsequent National Encampments Proceedings (2016-2020)

Any proof of lineage discussions concern how we were to store the proof of lineage documentation. There were no further voting or discussions about the proof of lineage requirement.

140th National Encampment (2021) Proceedings, Pages 131 (Not Released)

Sumner G. Hunnewell, Department of Missouri

Sumner Hunnewell, Past Department Commander, Department of Missouri. The question I would have then, is the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief also validating all the lineage...

Bruce D. Frail, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief

...Yes...

Another example that the membership believes proof of lineage is required. There were no further voting or discussions about the proof of lineage requirement.

Form 3 – Membership Application, Page 4

Supporting Documentation: Copies of your ancestor's original service or pension records or Adjutant General records must accompany the application. Additional information about the applicant's Civil War ancestor, including but not limited to his affiliation with the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), or other post-Civil War veterans' organization(s), and his resting place may be attached as well. Computer or internet generated secondary reports are not acceptable.

The Instructions outline the requirements for proof of his ancestor's service. There is no mention of any supporting documentation for proof of lineage.