

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

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National Counselor Opinion 002-2024

Background

Over the past months the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War has received several inquiries regarding the Life Membership requirements of those Life Members to pay Camp and or Department dues following their approval as Life Members.

The following are examples of this inquiries:

1. Department of Massachusetts :The Department of Massachusetts and L.A. Tiff Camp 15 have a dilemma regarding one of our Brothers XXXXXX recently regained his membership after many years, rejoined Camp 15 and obtained his life membership. He has had a difficult time communicating with his brothers in the camp and most recently after requesting and being given the address to send his camp dues has further requested no further contact and to be removed from all camp and department email lists. I had suggested that national membership at large might be the best option, but he seems adamant that he wants no further contact with anyone from Massachusetts. My question is how does this effect(sic) his membership with the camp and with the SUVCW overall? He will be a member in good standing until his camp dues are unpaid. Massachusetts does not require department dues. If Camp 15 drops this brother for non-payment of dues, does he remain a life member. Does he become a national member at large automatically? Will national alert him to the possibility of at-large membership?
2. Department of California/Pacific: I need a little help, maybe more..depending on who you ask. We have a Dual member (Department of California and Department of Ohio). He became a Life Member listing his Ohio Camp on his Life Membership Application. So that will relieve him of National dues in the Department of Ohio and maybe Department dues depending on their policy. He will still need to pay all required for the Department of Calif., correct? National, Dept., and Camp. He would need to become a "Dual" Life member, a life member in both departments to be relieved of paying any National dues. Thanks for some input.

3. Unknown Department: Apparently Brother XXX has refused to pay Camp and Department Dues for the past couple of years and the General RHG Minty Camp has covered his Camp and Department per capita until this year. They wish to clear up their rolls and have issued an Honorable Discharge (See attached Form 30 HD) How do we handle this? I assume that is still a Life Member of the SUVCW but he is not a member of any Camp that we are award and by our Department By-laws to permit Brothers at Large.
4. Unknown Camp: Brother David, my local camp has 2 Life Members that have not remitted their camp nor department dues for 2024. After multiple newsletter announcements, emails and personal notices, these brothers have failed to reply nor make remittance. The camp hates to automatically drop life members, who are exempt from national per capita, but subject to camp and department dues. What are our options?
5. There are also similar concerns from the Department of Florida and Alabama on this subject, but the queries were not provided.

Opinion

1. As the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Charter, Constitution, and Regulations (C,C,&R) is mute on the matter of discipline of Life Members, this Opinion as with other Opinions will require the concurrence/approval of the Commander-in-Chief (CinC) . The ruling of the CinC being in effect upon that concurrence/approval until if and when the National Encampment takes up the matter. If the National Encampment does not take up that matter then it becomes “the law of the land” to be entered into the C,C & R.
2. There are a couple of issues in this matter. (a) the non-payment of dues. (b) types of discharges regarding non-payment of dues (c) Must a Life Member maintain membership in a Camp, Department, Department at Large, or National Membership at Large to maintain membership in the Order (d) Suspension of Membership for non-payment of dues Order wide.
3. Life Members ARE REQUIRED to pay annual Department and Camp level dues. This is clearly pointed out in the 2nd paragraph of the Life Membership Application (Form 9). If the Life Member fails to pay Camp his dues by 1 March of every year he can be dropped from the Order (National Regulations Chapter 1, Camps, Article II, Membership Section 3 (a) page 35 of the C,C, & R. If the brother is dropped by the Camp, he cannot apply to any other Camp or membership at Large unless have received the concurrence of the Camp that Dropped him. Repayment of dues can still be required prior to reinstatement IN ANY CAMP.
4. Footnote 25, of the C,C, & R further states that if a Camp has paid dues on behalf of the Brother, in anticipation of that Brother later paying such dues, along with associated fines, and which the Brother is subsequently dropped for failure to pay, CANNOT be considered as prior indebtedness for the purposes of rejoining the SUVCW.
5. If the Camp decides to suspend the brother rather than drop him from the Order, the suspension is Order-wide. 125th National Encampment page 17-18 labeled (page 31-32 to print out). NC Robert Grim, “Basically, if a member is under a disciplinary proceeding (suspension) in one Department and holds a dual (sic) membership in a second Department, I have ruled that the discipline applies throughout the Order and is not just

limited to the Department where the person is being disciplined. My opinion was that discipline applies through the Order. And that was endorsed by the Commander-in-Chief.” The National Encampment did not overturn the Opinion or the ruling.

6. As the SUVCW has long been a “from the bottom (Camps) to top (National) Organization it is reasonable that in Order to maintain a membership a brother (Life Member) would be required to maintain his status as a “member in good standing” at the Camp level. Footnote 6 page 26 of the C, C, & R states “A Brother cannot be a member-at-large to National Headquarters, if he resides in a state served by a Department (CinC Orr, General Order 18, 117th, 110) In case 1, above, I would maintain that the brother in question, for all practicable purposes by default, asked for a SUVCW Transfer Form (Form 4). He would then have 1 year in which to present the Form 4 to a Camp/Department more to his liking. If he fails to present the Form 4 within one year, he is honorably discharged a brother thus discharged can be admitting to membership again only in the same manner as an applicant for original membership (once again bottom to top).” He would then forfeit his Life Membership and Fees associated therewith. (National Regulations Chapter 1 Camps, Article II Membership Section 5, page 36).
7. And as stated in paragraph 5 above, disciplinary action by a Camp, Department is Order-wide.

In summary, Yes, a Life Member is REQUIRED to pay Camp and Department dues. A Camp/Department can waive these payments if they desire. If the Life Member fails to pay the required dues the Camp/Department can take disciplinary action against the Life Member just like any other member of the Order. Either dropping him with a General Discharge or suspending him until such dues are paid. (National Regulations Chapter 1, Camps, Article II Membership Sections 3 (a) through Section 6.)

Yes, the Life Member is required to maintain his membership in a Camp. He cannot be a member of the National Membership at large if his state served by a Department.

In the Case 1 above, I would suggest that the Department issue a Transfer Form 4 (Form 4) and mail it to the NATIONAL SECRETARY that the NATIONAL SECRETARY inform the brother that he has 1 year in which to submit the Form 4 to another Camp more to his liking. I only suggest going through the National Secretary as the brother in question does not want contact with the Department.

In Case 2 above, First Article VII Membership Section 1 Membership classes (b), does not list a “Dual Life Member” as a class. The Camp/Department can do one of two things, drop the brother from the roles of the Department and inform him that in order to rejoin the Camp/Department he will need to pay the past dues, and the reinstatement fee and issue him a General Discharge. Or suspend him and thereby hold his membership in limbo throughout the Order until such time as he pays the dues owed the Camp/Department.

In Case 3 According to Footnote 24, page 36 of C, C, & R as noted above dues that were paid by the camp cannot be considered prior indebtedness. So the Camp can only collect dues for this year. IF the camp issues a discharge, it will be a “General Discharge” NOT an “Honorable Discharge” (Regulations Chapter 1, Camps, Article II, Membership Section 3(a).)

In Case 4 The Camp must decide how it wishes to proceed looking to pages 35 through 38 that I have previously mentioned.

I remain,

Donald E. Darby

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National Counselor

In the above Opinions 001-2024 and 002-2024, I am in agreement and rule that these Opinions are well taken, and further explain/interpret the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Charter, Constitution, and Regulations. These Opinion and Ruling are in effect from this date forward or until action of a future National Encampment.

Peter J. Hritsko, Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Attest

Daniel Murry
National Secretary
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War