

general governor

Why Do We Ask You To Show Your Membership Card?



Showing your Moose membership card means:

- The holder is a fraternalist, a friendly person who enjoys the company of others – and who stands ready to help a fellow human being in need.
- The holder is someone who has a special place in his or her heart for children. Through his or her Moose membership, he is doing something real and tangible to provide hope and a better life for youngsters in need, at Mooseheart Child City and School in Illinois.
- The holder is ensured that – even if he or she (and his or her spouse) reaches retirement age without adequate savings – together they will enjoy a secure, dignified retirement without being a burden to either family or society, through the availability of Moosehaven in Florida.

I have walked into many, many Moose lodges during my years as a member. Every time, I have been proud to reach into my wallet as I entered, to fulfill the requirement of displaying my Moose membership card.

Even though showing a Moose membership card every time a member enters a lodge or makes a purchase says many positive things about a person, I know that this requirement has been a big point of irritation among many Moose. “Fifteen years I’ve been a member here; why in the world should I have to show my card every time I walk in the door?”

Consider this scenario: You walk into your lodge’s Social Quarters on a busy Friday afternoon, the door opened for you by a polite smiling younger man you don’t quite recognize. Inside the lodge, the server, recognizing you – and knowing how much it irritates you – decides not to ask for your card. You request and receive a beer. Then, not wanting to offend the young man who held the door for you who is now standing next to you, the server also draws a beer for him without asking for a card.

Then, at the next month’s lodge meeting, this nightmare: your Administrator’s trembling hand holds an invoice for more than \$90,000 in back federal income taxes, interest, penalties and fees. The invoice has been presented to him that day by that same pleasant young man you stood next to at the bar that Friday afternoon! He was the regional IRS agent — and you had been right there when he witnessed the lodge operating as a public accommodation!

This scenario has actually happened to more than one Moose lodge. Their officers and longtime members didn’t want to be “bothered” with having to show their membership cards and subsequently paid a substantial price.

Let’s put the IRS and the income tax issue aside for a moment. Fraternal lodges such as ours enjoy special rights as a private organization, including the right to choose who will associate with us. This does NOT mean we afford ourselves the right to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, etc. in choosing our members.

However, we lose all the rights that a private organization enjoys, if we don’t conduct ourselves as a private organization! We cannot have it both ways. When a lodge chooses not to check membership cards, and essentially opens itself up to the public (with the exception of approved Community Service activities), that lodge puts itself and the entire Fraternity at risk of losing its right to operate under our own rules, and losing the right to choose our own members.

Showing your card may be a slight inconvenience, but it is worth it to protect our Mooseheart kids and Moosehaven seniors entrusted to our care. ■

Do you have questions concerning the General Laws? Please contact the General Governor’s office at 630-966-2207 or fax 630-966-2208.