



Moose Fraternity Votes To Make All Lodge Facilities Tobacco-Free

For Immediate Release

Contact: Darryl Mellema, Associate Editor/Department of Communications, Moose International
Phone 630/966-2229; email dmellema@mooseintl.org

MOOSEHEART, July 24 – There is a stereotypical image of a Moose lodge being a smoke-filled room. Starting Jan. 1, 2020, that image will be outdated as the Loyal Order of Moose voted at its June 28-July 1 International Convention in Las Vegas to make all lodge facilities tobacco-free.

The vote, made by delegates to the convention, received 77 percent support and easily met the two-thirds majority needed to change the organization's General Laws. The ban includes cigarettes and cigars as well as smokeless tobacco and vaping products. Lodges are allowed to have a separate facility such as a deck or room unattached to the lodge where smokers can go, but the interior of all lodges must be tobacco-free.

"It's a major step for our Fraternity. There's been a lot of talk in the last two decades about this. It's time to put that behind us and have our vision moving forward as we address our primary missions, the care for the children at Mooseheart and seniors at Moosehaven," said Moose International CEO/Director General Scott Hart.

Support for the ban was universal in favor of the ban from Moose corporate leadership, including Hart, the Supreme Council (Board of Officers) as well as support from the Women of the Moose and its Grand Council.

"It was essential that we go smoke-free. It not only opens up a whole new pool of prospective members from young and old alike, it will also help get families with children or grandchildren to become members. We are confident that members who have stayed away from our facilities due to smoke will now feel better about spending more time inside the lodges," Supreme Councilman Bruce Berger said.

Statistics from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show a decline in smoking in the overall population decade by decade. The rate of smoking among younger generations is even lower. Both these figures helped delegates make the decision on the smoking ban.

"We hear complaints all the time about members having to remove smoke-infested clothes before entering their home after a visit to the lodge," Supreme Governor Rodney Hammond said.

Prior to the vote in Las Vegas, many lodges voluntarily moved to ban tobacco products, acknowledging the trends and costs associated with smoking. Additionally, many states have passed tobacco bans that covered Moose lodges as well. Moose leadership's view was that as a family-based organization, a Fraternity-wide ban was necessary.

"This does put the onus on Moose International in that it looks like the decision is coming down 'from above.' But it's something that we needed to do for the health of our membership and for the health of our Fraternity," Hart said.

For the past six years, the Moose has offered lodges help with expenses through its Supreme Council Lodge Grant Program, which has been funded at \$1 million per year. Lodges have been able to apply for grants for a variety of improvements, however, this year they may also include alterations and remodeling expenses associated with eliminating lingering smoke damage, as well as accommodations for smokers in outdoor facilities..

"We want to respect the right for people who want to smoke. But we want that to be in an area of the lodge property that is designated for smoking in a way that also respects family members," Hart said.