

Ruling and Decision no 1

5 January 2025

The question has been asked as to whether a by-law may prohibit an Illustrious Master of a particular Council from concurrently serving as High Priest of a Chapter and/or Eminent Commander of a Commandery within the same York Rite Body. For the reasons below, we believe that if a Council were to adopt a by-law prohibiting an Illustrious Master from concurrently serving as another body head, then that by-law would be null and void.

We begin with the text of our governing documents and turn first to the Constitution and Regulations of the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Florida. We find them silent as to prohibitions of the eligibility of an Illustrious Master-elect that are contingent on election outcomes of our sister bodies. The closest prohibition appears in Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution, prohibiting officers of the Grand Council from serving as a Grand Officer of a different Grand Jurisdiction. This example does not apply here, as we are concerned with the workings of a singular Florida York Rite Body and not the crossing of grand jurisdictional lines.

Next, we examine the Digest of Masonic Law of Florida, as we also work under their authority. Regulation 19.01 concerning the eligibility of a Worshipful Master reads in part as follows, holding that "The Grand Lodge of Florida has ruled that a Lodge is the judge of the competency of its own members, and is authorized to elect its Master from the body of the Lodge." We believe this principle applies in our Councils, and we hold that the Companions of a constituent Council are the best arbiters as to the competency, skill, and ability of whom they should elect as their Illustrious Master for the upcoming year.

Finally, and most importantly, having such a by-law leads to a logical conclusion that one York Rite Body is either subordinate or superior to another. We believe that our York Rite Bodies are comprised of three concordant and equal bodies. A rule mandating that a Companion accepting election to the seat of Illustrious Master may not concurrently serve as High Priest or Eminent Commander has the effect of making the Council superior to the other two bodies. Conversely, if a Companion avoids nomination or requests to step down as the Illustrious Master-elect so that he may instead serve as High Priest or Eminent Commander, it has the effect of subordinating the Council to the other two bodies. We find such a logical conclusion at odds with the way the three York Rite Bodies have historically harmoniously developed.

It may indeed be that it is good policy to have an informal rule, a local tradition, or rule of thumb suggesting that a member of a particular York Rite Body should not concurrently serve as the body head of multiple bodies. We concede that there may be logical or pragmatic reasons to do so. However, for the reasons above, we do not believe that such a rule could be codified as a by-law, and any such by-law to the above effect shall be rendered null and void.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Kranio".

John A. Kranio

Most Illustrious Grand Master of Royal & Select Masters of Florida