



California State GRANGE

The Order of the Patrons of Husbandry

Brothers and Sisters:

As the Thanksgiving holiday fast approaches, I want to take this moment to give thanks that so many Grangers were open to the idea of meeting with me at Sebastopol Grange and North Fork Grange last week to discuss the issues that face our Order today and going forward. I want to give thanks that even defendants in the lawsuit were willing to take this step. I think we all learned that, when civil discussion takes place between brothers and sisters in our fraternal organization, and all of the facts are presented, we have much more in common and our goals and desires for our Order are much more closely aligned than we might otherwise have thought.

During those meetings, several of you asked me why the California State Grange is suing individuals. As I explained then, the individuals sued in the lawsuit were the members of the Executive Committee of the McFarland Group when the California State Grange intervened in the lawsuit. They were the decision-makers, and they had made decisions that openly defied the rules of our Order to which they (and all Grange officers) swore to be bound by when they took the obligation of membership and again when they took the obligation of office before being installed to the Executive Committee. Both of those obligations expressly state that the member/officer "shall faithfully comply" with the Digest of Laws and the State Grange Constitution and By-Laws.

The decision to sue the individuals was not taken lightly, nor was it done with the intention of seeking revenge or retribution. Nor, quite frankly, do I or any officer or member of the California State Grange have any desire to go after personal assets of people who are no longer responsible for the situation we are faced with in California today. The purpose of the lawsuit is and always has been to restore order to The Grange in California, and to ensure that the Grange assets donated and acquired by generations of Grange members since 1873 are used to grow and

enhance our fraternal Order. A couple of recent conversations made me realize that perhaps the lawsuit can be more narrowly tailored to achieve that goal.

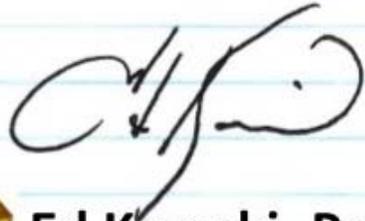
Jon Luvaas, one of the named defendants, attended the meeting at Sebastopol Grange. He and I spoke about his actions and the division that is currently rending our Order in California. The discussion was frank and forthright, and I believe both of us gained insight into what the other was thinking and why we did what we did over the past several years. We most certainly did not agree on every point, but we both were clear that we want a strong and growing Grange, so that all of the thousands of members in California can continue to do the good work for our communities that has defined our Order for over 140 years now. Simply put, it was the sort of conversation that should be encouraged, and that recognizes the fraternal bonds that tie us all together.

Likewise, I recently spoke with Damian Parr, another of the named defendants. Damian and I explained to each other the motives behind our actions, and the hope we share for the future of the Grange. It was a Grangerly conversation to its core.

In the wake of these conversations and my belief that both Jon and Damian truly want to move the Grange forward and heal the wounds caused by the last several years of division, I want to make something clear in front of the entire membership: the California State Grange will drop its claims against Jon and Damian. I have instructed the California State Grange's lawyer to take the steps necessary to officially drop the claims against Jon and Damian. There will be no trial of the California State Grange's claims against Jon and Damian in January.

I believe that reconciliation means returning to good standing. All Granges, Grangers and Patrons in California are already members of the California State Grange, even those that are not in good standing. It is my sincere hope that every Grange will take the steps to return to good standing so that we can move forward as a united California State Grange dedicated to restoring and growing our Order in California. The first step towards reaching that goal is to have open and honest communication. As my discussions with Jon and Damian, and with dozens of other Grangers at the meetings last week, made clear, when we have all the facts and understand where everybody is coming from, when we are not simply relying on propaganda, even seemingly insurmountable differences can be overcome. As always, if you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further with me, you can call or e-mail me any time.

Fraternally yours,



Ed Kowski, President, Master

California State Grange
chartered in 1873

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California State Grange Web Site

