

# Ruling

The minimum age to petition for initiation into the mysteries of Masonry in West Virginia is eighteen years.

Our Eighth Landmark of Masonry provides: "A Mason must be a man, free born and of mature age." *Laws of Masonry in West Virginia* 7 (15<sup>th</sup> ed. 2005).

Pursuant to Note 35.1, "A petition for initiation into the mysteries of Masonry is, in effect, a legal document; the petitioner must therefore be of lawful age (21 years) before he can properly execute such a petition." This was enacted in 1916. *Id.* at 81. By this, our Grand Lodge delegated to the civil law the definition of "lawful age" for Masonic purposes.

The Constitution of the United States was amended in 1971 with the adoption of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment, as follows: "The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age." U.S. Const. amend. XXVI, § 1.

The West Virginia Legislature in 1972 set eighteen years as the lawful age for legal capacity for making a legal document. "[N]o person who is eighteen years of age or older shall lack legal capacity, by reason of his age, to enter into contracts, sell or purchase real or personal property, create a lien, execute any legal or other written instrument, prosecute or defend legal actions, assert claims or deal in his own affairs in any manner whatsoever." W.Va.Code §2-3-1.

Accordingly, a man can petition for initiation into the mysteries of Masonry at eighteen years of age. It is further ORDERED, that all prescribed forms of this Grand Lodge be brought into compliance.

Done this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2006.

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Frank Joseph Haas  
Grand Master  
Grand Lodge of West Virginia  
AF & AM