

## Message from the Vice President

Happy spring Brothers! Even though the calendar has announced spring, and Punxsutawney Phil said spring is right around the corner; it's still pretty chilly here in northern New Jersey. Us golfers will just have to wait a few more weeks. In the meantime I suggest you take some time to reach out to your Chapter or visit one that may be geographically close before the school semesters come to a close. If you have time to visit a Chapter then that is great. If not then drop them a line or a note. One of the items the National Council has been working on is improved communications.

At the combined Council / Trustees meeting last September we developed a one page business plan that the National Council has been using as a guideline moving forward. Gerry Brill deserves the credit for creating the idea, and the full day meeting back in September 2010 at Mrs. Bedford's was the forum in developing the plan. We also used the feedback received from the survey commissioned by Shane McGoey, AXPEF's director of development. The two main tenets of the business plan are communication and finances supported by the mission statement, "The National Council is to provide tools to foster communications, support and a values based organization (using the Landmarks) for our Brotherhood."

Communication is probably the most important component in an organization such as ours. Misinterpretation of the actions regarding the National Council or AXPEF board or any of the Chapters has led to disagreements and misunderstandings in the past. This, I believe, is due to poor communication. For example, last fall we hired Omega Financial to serve as a third party to collect the National Initiation Fees and the Chapter assessments. On the surface, I can see how this decision can be seen as severe, rash or even aloof depending on your perspective. However, if you have tracked the progress of collecting these dues from Chapters and how it's been getting worse, you would then think the Council negligent had we not acted. The decision to use Omega Financial was done deliberately after putting the request for this service out for bidding, exploring other options and considering the ramifications of not addressing the situation and weighing that against the appearance of this decision as some form of punishment.

I cite this example because there has been blow back, deservedly so, from Chapters who do pay their dues timely. There are many Chapters that pay their dues on time. And although the requirement for using Omega Financial is mandatory going forward, past compliance with the National Headquarters requests and deadlines grant you and exemption. Communicating this point prior to enacting the policy would have improved relations, and we're going to try to do that better moving forward. Enactment of the new web portal and e-Garnet & White is a step in that direction.

Another major design discussed at the September meeting was commissioning the new website. With the disappearance of the Garnet & White several years ago and a static website, communications amongst the Brotherhood was suffering. I am still adamant that new means of communication be established and maintained by and for the Brotherhood. By raising thousands of dollars and spending thousands of hours we have launched a new web portal to increase fraternal communications. By now most of you should have received a postcard from National about the web portal and your login credentials. I urge you to sign in, subscribe to our publications, get in touch with old friends and check back frequently for information regarding upcoming and past events, scholarships and news regarding the Fraternity. We need many things at this time, and a very important one is your feedback on the steps we are taking and will take to move the Fraternity forward. It is our organization; your activity and involvement is a vital piece for making our Fraternity better.

Brother Victor M. Ramos, P.E.  
National Vice President