

Confessions of a Second District Candidate for District Office



The year is 2016, and I'm running for the office of First Vice District Representative of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.'s Mighty Second District (in 2018, I would run for the office of District Representative). 2016 would be my first attempt at running for District Office; I'd like to share some of my insight regarding running for political office on a District Level.

I would find that this journey would be filled with many, interesting characters; the most prominent would be the "Kingmaker". This character fancied himself as a "gatekeeper" who truly felt that the candidate's FIRST rule of order was to "kiss his ring", so to speak, in order to gain his approval and his support within his state's Chapter base. There are a few of these characters that exist and they've mostly held ranking offices within the District or International Offices in their pasts. Now understand; their approval would NOT be based on my personal "experience" or skill sets earned within the ranks of our District offices and leadership. On the contrary, their approval was solely predicated on whether I'd fall into line of THEIR perception(s) of how THEY felt the District SHOULD be run. As well, if you didn't come up through the "traditional" ranks (for example, running for First Vice District Representative without FIRST serving as District Keeper of Records and Seal (DKRS)) within the District Executive Council ("EC") BEFORE you decided to run, they would be averse to supporting you (whether you wanted their support or not). The true leader, in my opinion, doesn't HAVE to serve in a certain position before they petition to run for another; most leaders "lead" and are competent enough, if they've previously led, to do the jobs on the Executive Council. The point is that the "Kingmakers", based on whatever beliefs or experiences they've had, are generally and vehemently against those not in their "circle" who choose to "skip" the traditional "pecking order" or "protocol"; normally leading to their idea that the candidate (in this case, myself) could not be "controlled" and would eradicate their grand scheme of keeping some sort of control that they perceivably enjoy. Without their "approval", I could be deemed "unfit" for the position on the EC that I was running for (in THEIR eyes, of course). It wouldn't matter that my history included all of the attributes a person would want in a leader; commitment to the Fraternity via Life Membership, former duties as a District Committee Chair, Corridor 4 Representative for eight years and the pedigree of a Son of the Second District.

I was forced to create two very distinct categories: the "**So Much For Brotherhood**" and, fortunately, "**Great Brotherhood**" categories; based on the incredible behaviors of members (yes, "members") during my journey as a candidate for Second District office. To begin, the "**So Much For Brotherhood**" distinctions were awarded to the Kingmakers who weren't man enough inclined to do so themselves, but would gladly send their messengers to try and dissuade me from pursuing my immediate goals and spread mistruths about me around the Corridor and beyond. As well, awards went to those who would attack my character in my absence but never face-to-face. I reserved this award for the District Basilei who refused to return calls to ask for allowances to campaign at their Chapter meeting and then would make up unbelievable excuses when they saw me in person. This award would also be presented to the members who absent of the fact that I've never smoked a day in my life, would mandate an appearance at a "cigar party" in order to curry favor in order to campaign in front of their Brothers (AND, lest we forget, the members who "demanded" that I should attend their dinner dances and other "big ticket" events and purchase journal ads as an immediate "show of support" for THEIR Chapters). Believe it or not, there are members that are currently asking for my support of THEIR current candidate for office; the SAME

members who shunned my attempts to greet THEIR Chapters when I was a candidate. THOSE members get the "**So Much For Brotherhood**" award, as well.

Fortunately, there were not always bad characters and bad times. I spent time at Chapters that actually made me feel like a Chapter Brother; many times my very FIRST visit to their Chapter. These Brothers receive the "**Great Brotherhood**" award. I spoke and met Brothers with 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 years of Omega service who told me how they felt about things happening on the local, District and National level; a **Great Brotherhood** award goes out to those Fraternity Men. I hope that our elected officials can reach out to those Brothers and listen to their concerns. I also found out that the Brother who attends the conferences can sometimes be out of touch and does not agree with the same agenda as his local Chapter Brothers; there are levels and layers to politics that are not recognized. I became closer with many of the other candidates and opponents on all various road trips and the various political forums. This is a moment where the "**Great Brotherhood**" award cannot be overlooked.

I think everyone should run for a local or District office. The experience will give you a bigger, better picture of the complexity of people, Brothers, the management of personalities and events. As with all political endeavors, you MAY be asked to sell your WHOLE soul, beliefs or convictions. Each person has to answer that question and THEN live with the results. I was asked but, I refused! These are my experiences; Other Brothers may not have to kiss the ring or sell their souls.

Before I decided to write this article I spoke to a few Brothers who I trust to get feedback from. Some of the Brothers liked the idea of the writing of this article. One suggested I leave it alone; that "Brothers will be Brothers". One even suggested that I submit this article anonymously because he felt some Brothers might say that I'm writing this article because I'm a "sore loser". Interesting, but I believe I should always stand by my convictions and stand behind what I have said or written and not be the person who just whispers things behind a person's back or says things because it sounds cool just to gain a phoney advantage. I actually WANTED to say these things. Some Brothers did not want to write or say these things because they did not want to make waves.

We don't become better Brothers, people or human beings by not facing our fears, concerns and attitudes. Let us strive to have a **Great Brotherhood**.

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