

State Deputies Share Their Thoughts on Online Membership

Knights of Columbus staff spoke with Steve Cohen of Maryland, Steve Kehoe of Virginia and Doug Oldmixon of Texas, three state deputies whose jurisdictions have served as early testing grounds for the Online Membership initiative. Check out what they have to say about Online Membership and why they think it's a huge benefit Orderwide.

WHAT WAS THE THINKING BEHIND ONLINE MEMBERSHIP?

Cohen: Online Membership is an easy and efficient way to bring younger men into the Order. Guys want to use their phones instead of filling out a form and going through a long process right away.

Kehoe: We rely so much on technology to accomplish everyday tasks. The Knights needed to embrace technology and provide a platform to meet men where they are, and invite them to join the Knights of Columbus.

Oldmixon: How much time are men spending online? Safe to say, more than ever. Amazing moments of encounter are possible in this space. Why would we not meet them where they are?

WHAT HAS THE RESPONSE BEEN IN YOUR STATE?

Cohen: Overall the response has been great. More and more councils are using this as a way to recruit. They're placing bulletin ads at parishes. We're using it in round table situations. We're using it in council reactivations and have changed the age demographic considerably. Every day, more and more of our members in Maryland are buying into this program.

Kehoe: At first, in Virginia, the program was met with skepticism and confusion, probably like what you're experiencing in your state. But as we got going, as we learned more and saw the quality of men coming into the Order through this initiative, many minds were changed. Members here are convinced that this is the right step for us.

Oldmixon: Here in Texas we had 50 men join online in the first six weeks, and that was before we even really began a concerted effort to promote the program. This is tremendously encouraging.

ARE ONLINE MEMBERS GETTING INVOLVED?

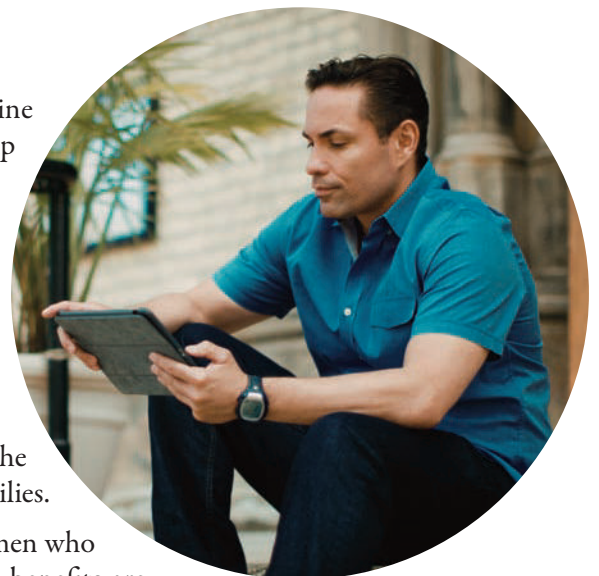
Kehoe: Yes. On average, men who joined the Order through the Online Membership initiative are joining local councils within a few weeks of signing up online.

Oldmixon: Since most of the men who join online express interest in being a part of a local parish council right away, once we get them transferred, we already have a self-motivated individual whose drive can serve to energize the local council. What more could a council ask for?

WHAT ROLE DOES INSURANCE PLAY?

Oldmixon: While it's not a requirement to purchase insurance and it's not the driving force for this initiative, it is accessible to all members to protect their families.

Cohen: A high percentage of men who have joined online in Maryland are men who have joined as a first step to joining local councils. Of course our insurance benefits are available to them, but it's not the primary reason for these men joining.



A Pool of Committed Prospects

Councils will now have access to a pool of dues-paying, committed members who have joined online and are interested in joining a local council. Sixty percent of the men who have joined online are interested in joining a local council right away. No doubt more of the men who join online will feel the same after they learn more about the Order and the great work our councils do.

DOES ONLINE MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT LOCAL COUNCILS?

Cohen: Councils in Maryland have responded really positively to this initiative precisely because they have been able to convert men who have joined online into their councils. I've heard consistently that these men are really good, and [they are] already active members.

Kehoe: Online Membership gives councils access to a pipeline of new members that they can recruit.

HOW WILL THIS HELP MY COUNCIL RECRUIT?

Oldmixon: Every recruiter now has an irrefutable answer for the man who says "I simply don't have the time to become a Knight." Ask if he has five minutes. That's all it takes. Then you can reach out with a simple reminder of each opportunity for personal involvement. Come give blood. Come serve food. Join us for morning prayer, even if it's just before golf. Since he is already a member, something will eventually catch his eye and move his heart.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE MEMBERSHIP?

Cohen: First, you need to know that it's available. This needs to be communicated by council and district leaders at every opportunity. You also need to understand that it's easy and effective. A common misconception is that it eliminates degrees, or that these men aren't vetted. That's not true. The council still interviews the gentleman before he takes his Admission Degree. Bottom line: We are not changing the way we do business; we are making it easier and more attractive.

Kehoe: This program is designed to attract eligible Catholic men to the Order, and as officers of a council, you need to realize that this program is designed to allow these men a new avenue for joining the Knights of Columbus. Use it! The best advice I would give every council officer is to be welcoming and to engage these new members so they will complete the admissions process and join your council.

A Smooth Transfer Process

Online Membership helps councils recruit quickly and efficiently because a man can join the Order online even if he intends to join a local council the next week, the next month or the next year. (Once he's been accepted by your council and taken the First Degree, you will still get the credit and the funds, so there's no downside.)

Asking a man to take out his phone and join the Order on the spot is easier than having him complete a prospect card or a *Form 100* and then trying to get in touch with him at a future date. Once he's an online member, you'll find it much easier to shepherd him through the admissions process and towards lifelong council-based membership in the Knights of Columbus!

Learn more. Visit kofc.org/onlinemembership.



"This program is only going to strengthen and grow the Order. Knights are a vital part of our parishes and communities, and these additional members will help us to continue Father McGivney's dream."

— Steve Kehoe

Oldmixon: It's really simple. Instead of carrying a *Form 100* around, you can direct men to knights.net for inspiration and immediate action. You can sign them up right on your phone. After joining, it becomes much easier to get a man to an initiation ceremony to later transfer into the local council.

HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THIS PROGRAM IS SUCCESSFUL?

Kehoe: Initially, we sent out an announcement for all councils to put in their parish bulletins. Since then, we've had articles in diocesan newspapers. We're leveraging men's conferences. Each month, we are looking and thinking of new ways to utilize and attract new members with this program. You will want to do the same.

Oldmixon: Ensure that it simply becomes one more way to get men involved. Meet them where they are currently comfortable, and invite them for further development. For them, this can be a great first step.