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Woman's Benefit Association
MRS. MAY A. C. SOMMERS
State Field Director
Room 1013, 705 Olive Street
St. Louis, Missouri

From J. E. Davis
3319 Bradley,
Hannibal, Mo.

May 29, 1936

(Given to him by a member of this organ. in Hannibal)

Dear Member of the Woman's Benefit Association and your Beneficiaries:

As you know, the Woman's Benefit Association has for many years been licensed by the State of Missouri to conduct the business of a fraternal benefit society, organizing its reviews and building up its membership in the state. The society has always complied with all requirements of the laws of Missouri relating to such society, paid all fees and received its license each year.

You will, therefore, be as shocked and surprised as I am to learn that our Superintendent of Insurance for Missouri, R. Emmett O'Malley, through Jerome Walsh, a Kansas City lawyer, and James P. Aylward, Chairman of the Democratic State Committee, also a Kansas City lawyer, has brought suit against your society for one hundred twenty thousand, two hundred sixty-eight dollars and seventeen cents (\$120,268.17), for the collection of taxes on your rate payments which they consider to be gross premium taxes and interest assessable on old line insurance companies by Missouri law. I understand that similar suits have been or are to be instituted against

sixty-three fraternal benefit societies now licensed in Missouri for a total amount of over eighteen million dollars, (\$18,000,000.00).

Doubtless, in bringing these suits against fraternal benefit societies, the Missouri state officials have believed that, if successful, the amount received would be paid by the society out of some of its presently existing funds. This is not a fact, as the society has no funds with which to meet such back taxes and under the laws, benefit funds cannot be impaired. The laws of our society and most others, require that the members in each state pay any taxes levied by their state. This is equitable, because a society cannot expect members of other states where no taxes are levied to pay taxes in Missouri.

It is our own state and not our society which is trying to place more taxes on its fraternal citizens, and thus make you pay a tax to our state for the privilege of carrying our fraternal protection for our families.

At the last session of the Missouri Legislature, Mr. O'Malley undertook to secure the passage of legislation which, if enacted, would in my opinion have driven every fraternal benefit society out of the state. This was defeated by the combined efforts of Missouri fraternal benefit society members and I am proud of the part members of this association took in that campaign. Mr. O'Malley is now attempting to levy these gross premium taxes on our society for all the years that it has been licensed in Missouri, claiming that it has been doing a commercial life insurance business and not that of a fraternal benefit society. This is even a worse attack on the fraternalists than his previous legislative effort of last fall.

Such tax suits have been brought in other states. They were originally started in Oklahoma by two lawyers, Wheeler and Wallace. It has been reported in the press that Mr. O'Malley made a

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contract with Mr. Jerome Walsh of Kansas City to give him 25% of all monies secured.

Mr. Walsh has with him in this litigation, Mr. Aylward, Chairman of the Democratic State Committee, and Messrs. Wheeler and Wallace. If these men are successful, it is estimated they will receive in fees over four million dollars (\$4,000,000.00) which will have to come out of the pockets of the members of fraternal societies who are citizens and voters in this state. This is a lot of money for attorneys and politicians to spend.

There are over six thousand members of the Woman's Benefit Association alone in Missouri who, with their beneficiaries, would perhaps number fully thirty thousand citizens of Missouri. There are approximately two hundred and seventy-five thousand (275,000) members of fraternal benefit societies in the state, who, with their friends, beneficiaries and relatives, would number at least one million, two hundred thousand (1,200,000) citizens who will be affected. These people have enough votes to carry the election of any state ticket in Missouri from top to bottom.

I ask you to join with other fraternal benefit society members in our state to defeat this movement by joining a political campaign, the object of which will be to endorse and vote for fraternalists and to secure a pledge from every one you elect to office that they will protect your interests.

It is time to mobilize to protect our interests and prevent this injustice to thrifty citizens of Missouri. State and local meetings of all workers and members of the Woman's Benefit Association will be arranged as soon as possible to explain this matter in detail to you. There is no question but what this tax can be prevented by the united action of all fraternalists in our state.

I appeal to you as a member of our association to help elect state officials and legislators in Missouri who are favorable to fraternal benefit societies and will oppose this tax.

Many of you have worked in fraternal societies for many years, helping the sick, extending fraternal help and assistance to sister members as pure fraternalists in

Missouri, all of which work will be rendered difficult, if not impossible, if the plans of the political office-holders are allowed to become effective.

You are a citizen of Missouri and your vote and the votes of your beneficiaries and friends will count. Watch your county papers for notice of meetings of fraternalists and attend these meetings. Fraternal Voters' Pledges will be circulated in your review. Sign them and urge all members of your family, beneficiaries and friends to do so.

See that men who will protect your interests in Missouri are elected to public office, and make your position known in clear and powerful language to every candidate for office.

VOTES WILL COUNT!

Fraternally yours,
May A. C. Summer
State Field Director.

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NOTICE

To the Members of the Woman's Benefit Association in Missouri

As you are advised in detail in the enclosed letter, fraternal benefit societies in the State of Missouri are threatened with taxation amounting to a total in excess of eighteen million dollars (\$18,000,000.00), if the present state administration of which Mr. R. Emmett O'Malley is Superintendent of Insurance, continues in power.

The question of this additional taxation is more important to the individual members of fraternal benefit societies than any other political question in Missouri today. In order to ascertain the position of the candidates for Governor on the subject of whether or not

fraternal societies should be taxed, a meeting of a Special Campaign Committee composed of State Managers or representatives of fraternal benefit societies operating in Missouri, irrespective of their party affiliations, was held in St. Louis on March 13th. Mr. Jesse W. Barrett, Republican candidate for Governor, appeared before this meeting and pledged his support in favor of protecting the interests of fraternal benefit societies.

The Special Campaign Committee also arranged for an interview with Major Lloyd C. Stark, the Democratic candidate for Governor, to appear before the committee in St. Louis on April 25th. Major Stark refused to sign the questionnaire which was presented to him, or to pledge his support of members of fraternal benefit societies.

As members of the Woman's Benefit Association in Missouri, our duty is clear and that is to elect a Governor of this state who will see that the members of fraternal societies in this state are not required to pay back taxes for which the laws of the State of Missouri do not provide.

Mr. O'Malley has brought suit against the Woman's Benefit Association in the amount of one hundred and twenty thousand, two hundred sixty-eight dollars and seventeen cents (\$120,268.17) for back taxes. If you wish to escape paying your share of these back taxes, you should vote for the candidate for Governor who will see that this suit for taxes is withdrawn and that no further attempt is made to tax fraternal benefit societies in Missouri.