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# Poker night disrupted over fee proposal

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The guys and I get together at Dave's house every Thursday for a friendly night of poker. Dave has a nice, big house and enjoys the company. He is a single man and he takes care of his elderly mother.

For the last few years our group has gathered around the table, smoked cigars, offered each other advice and have really helped each other out. The poker game at Dave's is one of the highlights of the week.

So the other day I showed up at Dave's with a pocket full of some nice cigars from the smoke shop to give out to everybody.

Dave stood in the doorway. I could tell something was up.

"Hi, Brian. I've got to tell you something," Dave said.

"Yeah, what's going on? You've got to try one of these cigars," I said.

"That's sort of what I wanted to talk about. As background, do you remember several years ago when we started getting together at my place how the walls, the sofa, the tablecloth and the drapes were all clean and white? I have tried to keep them white at no charge to my guests for many years even though the maintenance requires a number of chores that are demanding of time and resources. This was possible because of contributions from my mom who provided many hours a week of housekeeping with minimal effort from me. Because Mom's physical condition has declined sharply with age and the chores are now my responsibility, I am seeking a new way to fund my home's continued maintenance," Dave said.

"What are you getting at, Dave?" I said.

"For instance, I have paid several thousand dollars for a smoke filtration machine to keep the cigar smoke from staining the color of the walls. In order to help defray the cost of this investment, I am proposing to charge a user fee of \$5 per friend, per day. The \$5 will entitle each friend the use of a chair around the table, the living room sofa or any other furniture for sitting, toilet facilities and refrigerator storage space," Dave said.

"You want to charge me \$5 to come in your house?" I said.

"The \$5 per visit is one alternative. Another is a \$50 annual pass for frequent visitors that would authorize unlimited visitation for one year from the date of purchase, during times when I am home and am free enough to entertain visitors," Dave said.

"Dave, if you need some help scrubbing the walls or shampooing the carpet or something, I'd be happy to pitch in. Or how about the rest of us buy the snacks and beer," I said.

"Grocery budgets in my home are allocated separately from the budget for housekeeping from which the cost of my new smoke filtration machine has been funded. Refreshment budgets have historically been low but have recently improved in response to Mom's increased appetite for refreshments such as cheese puffs, corn chips, pretzels and several cases of cheap beer per week. Mom's appetite and her social security money have been critical to the success of my home providing satisfying snacks and cold beer to my guests at minimal cost," Dave said.

"Whoa, whoa, there Dave. We've been drinking your mom's beer and eating her food that she pays for with Social Security money? That doesn't seem right. I'll tell you what, why don't we just all take smoke breaks outside and we'll just bring our own food and drinks from now on? Problem solved, right?" I said.

"Not quite. I am developing a five-year proposed 'Program of Work' to meet the following goals: Operate and maintain my house to established standards of health and cleanliness within the funding available from either appropriated budgets or user fee revenues; reduce deferred maintenance by 20 percent within five years; focus available resources on furnishings and appliances which conform most closely to the unique experiences my home has to offer or my home's 'recreation niche'; maintain and enhance guest satisfaction with my home," Dave said.

"Wait a minute, I thought we were just paying off your new smoke filter," I said.

"The smoke filter should offset some of the cleaning costs associated with presence of clouds of cigar smoke in my home. I mentioned the improvement in the grocery budget due to Mom's increased dependence on junk food and alcohol. However, due to her declining health that I have also mentioned, I do not expect the increase in the budget indefinitely. Without Mom's Social Security

subsidy to the poker night refreshment fund, some user fee revenues may need be shifted from the housekeeping fund into the refreshment fund," Dave said.

"Dave, you are talking me in circles. Just be straight with me. You want to charge me \$5 or \$50 a year to come in your house? Is that right? After we've been friends for all these years? After I helped you move into this house? Heck, you hosted my wedding here in your house! Now suddenly your friendship comes with a price?" I said.

"I believe this will be a good tool for maintaining and enhancing customer satisfaction with my home," Dave said.

"Customer satisfaction? I'm a customer now? This is outrageous! For me and a lot of the guys, this our home away from home. You need help painting, roofing, carpeting, all you've got to do is ask. I'll even take my shoes off when I come in, but I'm not going to pay money to hang out. Where did you come up with this scheme, anyway?" I told him.

"I didn't think it was unreasonable. In fact, I based the plan - and a lot of the language -- on the documents they passed out at a Shawnee National Forest meeting. If the U.S. Government can take our tax money and still charge us for going to Garden of the Gods and Bell Smith Springs and all those other places, why can't I?" Dave said.

"What did the other guys think of your plan?" I said.

"Bob took out a \$5 bill, tore it into little pieces and threw it in my face before stomping off. Jeff spat on the welcome mat and spun gravel when he drove away. Richard gave me \$5, told me, 'Good luck to you and your mom with your new brothel,'" he said.

"Yeah. Here, have one of these cigars. I guess I'll go home and watch television," I said.