

# Redistricting MD19: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead!

By PCC John Kirry, Chairperson, MD19 Strategic Planning Committee

At the June 2021 Spring Council Meeting, the Council of Governors unanimously passed a resolution to begin the process of consolidating our Multiple District from nine districts into five. The Strategic Planning Committee, at the direction of then CC Al Hedstrom, spent a good portion of last year looking at the technical and human side of changing the internal boundary lines of our current nine small district into five larger districts within the current boundaries of MD19.

But we really got into high gear in the past few months as we have seen significant downward changes in our membership numbers. If membership losses continue apace and we follow this downward trend, our multiple district could become extinct in 10 years or so.

The important impetus behind this administrative change is simply this: The nine districts that make up MD19 lost an aggregate total of 808 members in our recent Lions year 2020-2021. This is the largest single-year loss in our history, and it has come as a stunning shock to all. Simply put, it's time to get moving, and redistricting is the chosen path of the Council of Governors. There are many challenges and opportunities ahead!

## What is Redistricting?

Redistricting, also called consolidating, is explained clearly by Lions International in their online PDF "Guide for Consolidating Districts." Redistricting is managed over a two to three-year period with the main goal to increase the minimum size of each district to 1250 members and 35 clubs. These changes will improve district and club administration so that robust leadership, membership and service programs can operate more effectively and efficiently. In the words of LCI:

- Your District needs to run at a peak performance level to best support healthy clubs. In order to maximize the efforts of district leadership, it may become necessary to restructure to operate in a more effective and efficient manner. The redistricting process is designed to accomplish that task.
- While the ideal size for a district has been debated, there is little doubt that a district should be large enough to have a sufficient pool of trained, qualified district leaders, a well-attended and meaningful district convention and ample resources to support club development.
- While membership growth should always be a part of the plan, redistricting can infuse the district with a mix of new leaders who can look at district activities in a new way, combine resources to more effectively meet the needs of the clubs. Redistricting, when done well, can strengthen the district and stimulate membership growth, enhancing the districts' ability to provide needed humanitarian service.
- All current districts will have a neighboring merger partner which, when consolidated, will provide for a more efficient and larger District. It is our goal as a Multiple District to engage our current districts and their nearby merger partners with a spirit of cooperation and "can-do" attitude to keep the process moving along in the face of the many challenges ahead.

## The Redistricting Challenge:

Redistricting is not a panacea. We have to do the hard work of consolidating in order to see the benefits. Redistricting is not a substitute for an active and vital membership and retention program at every club. Redistricting will not magically produce new leaders in our clubs. But a mix of new leaders in the new district can inspire new leadership models which can help clubs be more effective in accomplishing their service goals.

## The Path Ahead

As mentioned, redistricting is a project completed over 2-3 years. For example, the earliest we can submit our redistricting plan for approval by LCI is at the October 2022 Board Meeting. Even then, Redistricting would not be effective until July 1, 2023. But we will have LOTS TO DO in the meantime, including the formation of active district merger committees who will begin the hard work of consolidating district officers, cabinets, finances, and dozens of other important programs. The Strategic Planning committee will meet online with our current District Governors on August 11 to officially kick off our Information campaign to every Lions Club, Zone and District in MD19.

## The Central Information Hub for Redistricting

The main hub for information will be online at our MD19 website. Several key documents such as a Timeline Road Map, Frequently Asked Questions and Merger Committee make-up and responsibilities will be posted. Currently, there are already several documents on the MD19 website to provide education and background information about Redistricting. This information can be found on the MD19 website Home Page under "In the Know." <https://lionsmd19.org/>

## "Resilience in the Face of Change"

Current Council Chairperson John Moralek's theme is a strong one: "Resilience in the Face of Change" We are about to set off in a new direction, one that will require the energy and enthusiasm of us all. Redistricting is a big job, but we have smart, innovative, cooperative, generous and resilient Lions who are up to the challenges and opportunities ahead!