

"Federation Corner" column  
The Montgomery Sentinel - October 27, 2011

## **A guide to redistricting**

by Dan Wilhelm  
Chair, MCCF Legislation Committee

### ***Introduction***

*Redistricting is a process of redrawing boundaries of areas that are used to facilitate the election of officials at various levels of government--Federal, state, and local. Electoral districts define the area within which a candidate running for elected office must live, or within which the voters casting ballots in certain political contests must live, or both.*

*The general guidelines governing the redistricting process are mandated by the Federal Government, and are designed to insure that those elected to certain offices (like the delegates and senators elected to serve in the Maryland General Assembly) will each represent an equal number of constituents. The current redistricting efforts that began mid-year, and will conclude early next year, will set the boundaries of Federal, state and county electoral districts based on the results of the 2010 Federal census.*

### **Montgomery County redistricting**

Most of us are aware that electoral redistricting is occurring but are unsure of the specifics of the process. All citizens within the county vote for certain elected officials--the County Executive, the four At Large County Council members, all seven members of the School Board, the state Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, U.S. Senators, the President and Vice President.

There are however three sets of officials that represent specific areas or districts in which they must live, and who are elected only by voters living within the boundaries of those districts. These officials are:

- (1) the five County Council members elected from Councilmanic districts;
- (2) Senators and Delegates elected to the state General Assembly; and
- (3) Representatives to the U.S. Congress.

As for the School Board, all citizens within the county can vote for all seven members of the Board. Two of the seven serve as At Large members representing the entire county. The other five are elected to represent the five districts, and must live within the district they seek to represent.

The boundaries of the four sets of districts--the U.S. House of Representatives, state General Assembly, County Council, and School Board--must be redrawn after each 10 year census to ensure each official is representing substantially an equal number of citizens. There is a different process for approving changes to the boundaries for each of the four sets of districts.

### **County Council districts**

For the five county Councilmanic districts, the County Council normally makes the decision about the new boundaries. The Council appointed a Redistricting Commission on January 18, 2011. The commission report was presented to the Council on October 4 and there will be a public hearing on November 1, at 1:30 p.m. The Council can accept the proposed boundaries or modify them. But if the Council fails to take any action within 90 days of receiving the commission report, the proposed boundaries automatically become law.

The Council staff report and Redistricting Commission report can be found at:  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/Redistricting/pdfs/2011\\_Report\\_w\\_Analyst\\_Memo.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/Redistricting/pdfs/2011_Report_w_Analyst_Memo.pdf)

**Board of Education districts**

For the Board of Education, the Board develops and recommends boundaries to the Maryland General Assembly, who makes the final decision. The BOE made its recommendation on August 24. The Montgomery County delegation (8 senators and 24 delegates) held a public hearing on September 15 and the General Assembly acted on it during the special session that started on October 17.

Details on county Board of Education redistricting efforts can be found at:  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/about/redistricting.aspx](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/about/redistricting.aspx)

**State General Assembly districts**

For state legislative redistricting, the Governor is responsible for drafting plans and submitting the new maps to the General Assembly. The Governor appointed in early July a Governor's Redistricting Advisory Committee to assist in this task. Once the Governor submits a plan (on first day of the state General Assembly session in January), the house and senate chamber leadership must introduce the plan as a joint resolution. The General Assembly may then adopt the plan or pass another. If a plan is not adopted by the 45th day of the session, the Governor's plan becomes law.

**U.S. Congressional districts**

For the U.S. Congressional House districts, the Governor's Redistricting Advisory Committee developed two different maps. The public had a brief period during which they could comment. After the comment period, a single plan was proposed and the General Assembly approved it during their special session that started October 17.

*The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to [theelms518@earthlink.net](mailto:theelms518@earthlink.net)*