



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 1, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

It's April Fool's Day (April 1) but what I'm about to talk about in this newsletter is not a joke.

The preliminary 12-31-11 statistics (these numbers may still change as Lodges provide late reports to Grand Lodge) for the California Odd Fellows Lodges have just been provided to me and the statistics, sadly, show not only a continuation of the trend of declining membership, but an actual acceleration of that trend. The numbers paint a bleak picture of the status of Odd Fellowship in California. They show that we continue to be a mile wide as an Order, but in most places we're just an inch thick. Numbers don't lie. Here are the statistics to note:

* On 12-31-11 there were 4,377 dues-paying regular Odd Fellows in California. On 12-31-10 that number was 4,566, and on 12-31-09 that number was 4,643. So the net decline from 2009 to 2010 was 77 members, and from 2010 to 2011, the net decline was 189 members. You can see that our losses have not stopped, or even diminished - they have accelerated.

* On 12-31-11 the Order showed 132 Odd Fellows Lodges in California. On 12-31-10 that number was 141, and on 12-31-09 that number was 145. The net decline from 2009 to 2010 was 4 Lodges, and from 2010 to 2011, the net decline was 9 Lodges. Again, you can see that our decline Lodges has not stopped, or even diminished - but has accelerated.

* If you drill down and analyze the member numbers for 12-31-11 even further, the results are even ominous:

* Of our 132 California Lodges, 66 show less than 21 dues-paying members. That is, fully half the Lodges in our jurisdiction show 20 or fewer members on their books.

* Of our 132 Lodges in California, only 26 have 40 or more members on their books. Of our 132 Lodges, only 19 have 50 or more members. And of our 132 Lodges, only 6 Lodges (California #1 in San Francisco; Apollo #123 in San Francisco; Yerba Buena #15 in San Francisco; Davis #169; Golden West #322 in San Francisco; and Lodi #259) have memberships in triple digits (100 or more members).

* Of our 132 Lodges, only 26 showed a net increase in members (and most of those showed a net increase of only 1 member) - the remaining 106 Lodges showed a net decrease in memberships or were static.



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These statistics continue to paint a grim picture for our great Order in California (and I am sure that these sorts of statistics are common throughout the USA. As I have said before, since World War II (some 65 years ago) our jurisdiction has shown a steady decline in membership. The situation continues year after year and is unsustainable. At the rate we are going, our order will show less than 4,000 members in two years - and we all know that only half the members in our Lodges are "active". What is especially troubling is the knowledge that fully half of our Lodges have less than 21 members. That's a big red flag for our Order. If a small Lodge has not shown a net increase in membership for years, there is a serious problem that needs to be faced and addressed.

This trend - unless reversed - can have only two possible futures: (1) This Order will diminish and expire within the next decade or two, or (2) This Order will devolve so that only the largest 20 (or so) Lodges survive to carry on Odd Fellowship. It is the goal of Dedicated Members for Change to reverse this trend, strengthen and sustain the Order throughout California. Thank you for your participation in and support of DMC.

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Dave Rosenberg