



*WPMA President,
Steve Clark*

REGRET *Is My Only Symptom*

This letter was supposed to be a post-convention celebration and wrap up. A big hoo-ha of all the fun events we experienced together, the great food we enjoyed, the building and re-establishing of business connections, and the comfort of being with industry friends that can relate to the challenges we share in this industry.

Our executive board decision to cancel the show, and indeed cancel everything including a virtual show, was difficult and shocking. Even up until the middle of November I was 90% sure that the show would happen. While not easy, the choice was clear and ultimately in the best interest of everyone.

We've all seen and heard the national numbers on the financial hit to the US. They are mind numbing and honestly hard to relate to our everyday lives. We are not alone. The Center for Exhibition Industry Research estimates the convention industry to contribute over \$100 billion to the US economy every year. Along with the hospitality industry, the convention/trade show industry was one of the hardest hit from the coronavirus. It will take Las Vegas years to return to normal, as it was the number one hardest hit metro area on unemployment, hitting a staggering 32% at its worse point in 2020.

Instead, we must focus on mitigation of losses and a long-term plan for digging out. Thankfully our contract with the Mirage allowed us relief from our room obligations and our out of pocket expenses were minimized. The revenue side of things is another story. Membership dues provide some income, but the Expo is obviously the biggest contributor to the financial stability of our industry Association. Down years are to be expected, but this is a significant blow.

Reserves are a great thing however, and they will indeed be our saving grace. Prior to coronavirus the board had made a wise decision to increase our reserves to a level that would equal three years' operating expenses. The plan was just under way when the pandemic hit so we did not build our reserves to meet our goal. But we do have plenty of cash to get us through to the other side and it underscores the need for a healthy war chest of reserves.

And so, we look toward 2022. The grittiness and tenacity of people in our industry will serve us well as we come together and restore what we've lost. Whether our national recovery will be a V shape or a U shape or a W shape, WPMA will all be back in full force in Las Vegas in **February 2022**.

