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Letter from the President & CEO

2021 will be a remarkable year for associations. Much has been said - in seriousness and jest - about the daunting challenges of 2020. While Americans are divided on some issues, we are singularly unified in the delight of putting 2020 behind us. Fair enough.

But the harsh conditions and lessons learned over the past year were catalysts for what is shaping up to be a true renaissance for associations. Consider our current status:

- Members are looking to associations for leadership and a voice. The power and efficacy of associations were so well evidenced during the crisis that more new associations formed at a single point in time than we've seen in more than half a century.
- Associations provide much-needed community and support. The unity of purpose and collegiality of associations serve to relieve the isolation and feelings of helplessness created by the pandemic.
- Members and associations embrace technology. Quarantine and social distance mandates forced people to adopt and utilize technology solutions, dramatically increasing the speed of a change that would have otherwise taken decades.
- Associations are nimble and member-focused. Long considered to be slow-to-change, bureaucratic entities, associations are now quick to anticipate and respond to changes in the environment and member needs.

As leaders, we have the privilege and responsibility to take all that we've learned and leverage these hard-won conditions to build a future we can be proud of. Having had a front-row seat and witnessed all that you've accomplished in the past year in the most unfavorable conditions, I know the future is bright for associations because it's in such capable hands. I have been humbled and inspired by your servant's heart, your grit, and your resourcefulness. Bravo and well done to you and your association.

Happy New Year! Here's to all that we will achieve for our associations in 2021!

The Chairman's Perspective

The flip of the calendar, from one year to the next, offers a time to plan, while reflecting on past successes and difficulties. The flip from 2020 to 2021, is certainly not standard in any way. The current environment has changed lives and the way we work. It has led some leaders to view their organizations and missions totally through the COVID lens for most of the year. I fundamentally believe they are missing an opportunity.

Once in a lifetime events like this one, require leadership from the highest level. During the first weeks of the pandemic, the shutdowns we face may have seemed like a crisis management dream. You can certainly feel like you are getting something done by setting up new communication methods or accountability systems for at-home work but our world needs much more than talented management. As work from home orders lasted from weeks to months and soon into a year, it is clear, that this chessboard needs leaders that are able to plan three, four or five moves ahead. No one can deny that COVID is a catalyst for change, true leaders are making sure they see a positive change for their organizations.

The long-term success of the association world depends on planning and preparing for the challenges still ahead. Associations exist to accomplish goals that an individual could not achieve alone. I have noticed the association world doing things that may have taken us a decade to get to, if left to our own devices. Leadership during this time set us up for that achievement. So, as the calendar flips from 2020 to 2021, take a deep breath and remember that managing the current situation will only take us so far; true leadership can change the arc of history. Your staff, members and association depend on it.