



**President Video - Patty Cobb Baker
March 31, 2020**

In this historically difficult time, it has been heartening to see all of us pulling together to help keep one another safe by being apart but — by no means, disconnected. My own spirits have been lifted each and every day as I witness on social media our directors, leaders, and singers finding ways to “virtually” touch one another, both musically and emotionally. I am incredibly proud to see Sweet Adelines adding our voices and our harmony to the worldwide effort of musicians to keep spirits strong at a time when our art is so very much needed.

As you know, many major events around the world have been cancelled or postponed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including our own regional competitions and July’s International Education Symposium. We now face the very difficult process of making a decision about our October international convention and competition, which has been a highlight of Sweet Adelines since 1947.

As of today, a **decision to cancel or postpone the convention has not been made**, and I want to take time in this video to share with you the **process** we are employing to ultimately make a decision and the many **factors** involved and being considered. I believe that the more you know about how we’re approaching this decision, hopefully, the easier it will be for you to make your own personal plans and decisions.

As with any major decision, we must first ask ourselves what we are trying to achieve with the decision. This is a simple question. **Our goal is to ensure that your health is not put at risk by having our convention and competition this October, and we commit to you that that will always be the primary decision factor.** To do this, we are monitoring the COVID-19 situation, 24/7, and gathering information daily on its predicted spread and ultimate resolution. We believe that, based on current data and information, a firmer grasp on the progression of COVID-19 throughout our regions will become clearer in the next few weeks.

There are many additional factors we are considering, as well. We are, of course, evaluating the timeline for the video submission contest for this year’s regional competitions, which feeds contestants for the quartet competition in October. We are looking at the ability of the International chorus and quartet contestants’ to rehearse and prepare for their October performances. We are considering the fact that financial hardship as a result of the pandemic will be a factor for members, and that many members may have a very understandable fear of travel or gathering in large public groups for the foreseeable future. On the organizational side of things, we are talking to our Louisville hotels, vendors, and the city so that multiple options may be considered

that might help mitigate the significant financial penalties that would be incurred without government direction to restrict public gatherings which, of course, are not in effect at this time for October. So, as you can see, there are many, many balls to juggle, plates to spin right now, pick your analogy. But rest assured, we are discussing, we are researching, we are being creative, and we are thinking of YOU. And **we WILL make the best decision for YOU at the earliest possible time.**

In the meantime, we have made some policy changes to help you during this time of financial uncertainty. The International Board of Directors just **approved an extension of the grace period for membership renewals from 60 to 150 days.** So, if your membership renewal was tomorrow, you could wait to renew it for 150 days, or 5 months, instead of the usual 60 days and still maintain good standing in your chapter. **The deadline for charter renewals has also been extended from June 30th until July 31st.** **The quartet registration fee has been discounted from \$100 to \$50 from May 1 through June 30th of this year.** In addition, the regional and chapter **verification of audit that is normally due on July 15th has been extended until September 15th.**

We have also made adjustments surrounding the Louisville convention in that **competitor housing reservation has been extended until June 30th.** Finally, **we recommend that you do NOT book a flight for Louisville at this time.** A decision about the convention will be made in plenty of time for you to book flights, should that be necessary.

There is some other work we are doing to assist you educationally during our time of physical distancing. Our Education Direction Committee has compiled a fantastic Virtual Meetings “how to” document and it is posted on our Sweet Adelines website to help all choruses stay connected during this time of restricted public gatherings. The committee has also planned additional virtual education that begins this week. Members of our exceptional international faculty will be bringing you wonderful educational and inspirational content. From vocal to visual education and everything in between, these educational videos will fill our brains and our hearts with great barbershop craft and tools. Our guest faculty from last August’s directors and visual leaders seminar, Jennie Morton, is also generously sending us content to share – you won’t want to miss that. We will let you know when this education is ready for you, so stand by!

I hope that this information is helpful to you as you work through all of the upheaval the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into your world. Here’s something to reflect upon...Sweet Adelines International began in 1945 as our founding singers, like people everywhere, had just begun to recover from the trauma of World War II. We are an organization born during a global event that changed life as we knew it, and we are here, again. No matter what decision we make about our international convention, I know that the musical and personal bonds that bring us together will remain strong, and that one day we will again raise our voices **together** and feel in our hearts the magic created by the beauty of harmony and the gifts of friendship.

Thank you for your time, and stay SWEET ADELINES STRONG.