



International President Joan Boutilier Video Script – May 29, 2020

Hi everyone,

It's just been a month since Patty Cobb Baker and I spoke to you, and I know there are several topics you have been wondering about since then. I will address them, but first, I'd like to say how much I've been thinking about you and hoping you're well. I've had the opportunity to visit a few virtual rehearsals, and your smiles, voices and faces are so good to see. It's been nice meeting you and being welcomed into your chorus home.

I know you're wondering about where we're at with a decision regarding our 2020 International Convention and Competition in Louisville. In fact, my chorus is "Contestant #2" and like many of you, we've been eagerly waiting for things to get worked out with Louisville. You have been so patient and we thank you for that. We ask that you be patient for a little bit longer. Our professional staff at headquarters is continuing to talk to our Louisville partners about the possibility of being excused from our contracts. This is in alignment with the Board's fiduciary responsibility to ensure the sustainability of Sweet Adelines International. These contracts are complex legal documents and must be handled very carefully. One thing I know for certain is that we will not do anything to put our members at risk. And as soon as we are able to make an announcement, we will let you know.

Many of you have asked about reducing or eliminating International dues. We are currently conducting a complete financial analysis of our organizational budget to consider how we can ease costs to our membership. With International convention and International dues as our primary sources of revenue, the organization has been dealt a serious blow to our budget.

In addition to the online educational content, the music licensing services, *The Pitch Pipe*, and the certification programs for directors, arrangers, and judges, the \$100 USD you pay annually for your International dues contributes to keeping the organization running...things like organizing future International conventions, helping choruses work through revitalization, updating the website, and even helping me prepare this video for you to name just a few.

As I said earlier, we are conducting a complete financial analysis and looking at every way possible to help our members continue enjoying Sweet Adelines during this time of COVID-19. In March we announced an extension of the deadline for paying chapter and membership dues. We also announced an extension of the quartet renewals and a discount for quartet registration fees until June 30. We are redoing budgets for the

fiscal year 20-21 and reviewing all cost-saving measures for Sweet Adelines International. Many cost-saving measures already have and are being implemented including a recent reduction in work force at our headquarters office. We are also looking for ways to create new non-dues revenue streams. Our objective with these measures is twofold: one, to sustain our organization and serve our members during this crisis, and two, to be ready to swing back into action when we can all joyfully step back into our usual Sweet Adelines activities.

As far as being able to hold chorus rehearsals again, the scientific studies and conclusions are continuing to develop. Preliminary studies point to the act of singing as distributing more aerosolized particles and distributing them farther than in a normal conversation. We also know that someone can be infected with COVID-19 and not show any symptoms for up to 14 days. And with others, they can be infected but never show any symptoms at all. We'll each be following the guidelines set forth by our local communities and government authorities when it comes to making the decision to gather, and along with that, let's look for ways to minimize our risk.

I know that some groups where local restrictions have already been reduced have tried gathering in small groups, gathering outside, or standing socially-distanced in a straight line instead of in a semi-circle. If your local guidelines allow you to gather, we ask that you consider some leniency in your attendance policy to allow for members who are immunocompromised, caring for someone who is immunocompromised, or who are just not comfortable attending rehearsals at this time. We will get back to our usual way of rehearsing but it may take some time, and we need to be careful along the way.

Some of you have also asked if we intend to require that our members get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. At present, we don't have a plan for requiring a vaccine. Like you, we're watching the news and reading studies so we can open up safely and not put our members at high risk.

It's hard to believe the impact the pandemic has had on all of us and how quickly and profoundly life has changed in such a short time. I find myself balancing being realistic with being optimistic. Optimism is winning. Even during these unique times, we are finding creative ways to stay connected, to enjoy singing and to continue learning. Our passion for staying Sweet Adelines Strong is abundant.

Finally, over the past couple of months I've been sharing the lyrics of a song written by Renee Craig which has been shared with our entire organization in preparation for Sweet Adelines International's 75th Anniversary. The song is *The Voice Of Harmony*. It seems particularly poignant and meaningful at this time. It represents the voice of a person who deeply loved her organization and serves as inspiration for all of us.

The Voice of Harmony

By Renee Craig

Our hopes and our ideals are set forth in this single wish:
May all of us be drawn together by the golden sound of harmony,
 The true expression of singing,
 The pure artistry of understanding,

And the universal love of music,
May we be
The Voice of Harmony.

Thank you for your time and stay Sweet Adelines Strong.