

Hoping that your Christmas was Great and wish you a Great 2021

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Mona and I hope that each of you had a Wonderful and Happy Christmas and New Years weekend - safely - with family and friends. We also are wishing for you and yours a better – and more enjoyable and more prosperous new year as we begin 2021. Hoping the new year is somewhat nearer normal than 2020 has turned out to be. To be totally honest – it is a bit difficult to recall what NORMAL was.

We are looking forward to the beginning of 2021. The new year will bring the new legislative session – beginning January 12th, 2021. I assure you that I will be helping tend to the concerns and issues which are of most importance to those of us in rural Texas. The new session will present all of us with a whole set of new and interesting challenges. Some of these challenges may – at first – seem insurmountable. Let us – at the same time - look at the glass as half full. Let us see the new year and new legislative session as offering us broadened views - as we take advantage of these new and educational opportunities.

Even though both the Senate and House have established preliminary protocols - there is still no positive manner- or guidelines by which the legislature will function. There is no way to definitely predict what kind of challenges these new operating methods might impact upon you and me. It seems obvious that we will learn to become better prepared – as we approach the legislature – and our legislative needs. We will definitely find it necessary to better prepare ourselves during the interim periods – prior to the onset of the legislative sessions. The importance of continuing contact with our legislators will become more

obvious than ever before. We do know there will be a lot less openness in the legislative process - simply due to the cautious manner in which the Coronavirus will require the state to conduct their business.

I think we are all looking forward to being able to conduct our business – in a face to face – one on one manner – hopefully - in the relatively near future. As a whole – associations – businesses and public entities - have always depended on face to face meetings. We are missing that personal contact in the conduct of our business today.

I foresee that we might never return totally to what we have considered the “Old Normal”. We have discovered the convenience and cost saving element in using some degree of virtual communications – in lieu of driving long distances to solve some rather minor problem. We have discovered the time and money savings that this can accomplish. We will probably continue to utilize a certain degree of virtual communications in the conduct of our private and public businesses.

Both times and circumstance change – but – business - governing and life must go on. To be totally honest – most of us are slow to accept change. Many of us tend to resist changing to the NEW. We are often known to comment – “We have never done this before”. But in instances like the current health pandemic situation – change is a must. We will quickly learn to be flexible enough to adapt as required.

Those of us who represent you – will miss the daily/hourly opportunities to visit with legislators and staffers. The operational protocols that have been issued by both House and Senate provide a fairly clear outline of how we can – and cannot operate. Our Texas Ag Council will miss the contact and opportunities that we have enjoyed with our annual Taste Of Texas in previous years. The long time habit of taking in lunch for legislators and their office staff will be extremely limited in nature. We will miss that opportunity to sit in a members

office and air our ideas and concerns with the legislator – as well as their staff members.

Be prepared for lots of precautionary activities – such as temperature checks – questionnaire to fill out. Some of these precautions are established in the House and Senate protocols – while some of it will be at the discretion of the individual member – or committee chairman. It appears that it will be necessary to phone or e-mail/text ahead to gain an appointment to allow your entry.

Some of these challenging issues will be dependent in a large part on what the Cobid-19 levels reach. The expected spike in numbers following our holidays – and the gathering of large numbers of people during these first weeks of the session will become a major factor in the requirements necessary to cope with the pandemic environment.

BUT WE WILL SURVIVE

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE CAN MAKE IT THROUGH THIS SESSION