



Alpha Rho Chi

National Professional Fraternity for
Architecture and the Allied Arts

From the Office of the

Worthy Grand Architect
wga@alpharhochi.org

March 22, 2020

Dear Brothers,

We hope that this letter finds all of our members and the people around you healthy and safe. Last week, the Grand Council, working with the Convention Director and her team, made the difficult but inevitable decision to postpone the 73rd National Convention. In accordance with our Constitution, we asked for your authorization to postpone, and you responded swiftly and overwhelmingly to affirm our decision. We especially appreciate your trust, because we did not provide a lot of the background information that went into our decision. This letter will fill in the rest of the details.

Early last week, around March 9-10, we were still in full Convention Planning mode, but growing concerned as the news about the coronavirus was changing multiple times a day. By Wednesday, the national situation was worsening. One by one, schools and offices imposed travel bans and withdrew funding that delegates and other attendees were relying on for the trip. We began receiving registration cancelations, and chapters were reaching out to their Regional Directors and to the Grand Council for guidance. By Thursday, the CDC had requested that all voluntary travel around the country be avoided, and the nation began talking about self-quarantining. We watched the news as more and more schools announced they would close campuses and only hold classes online. By Thursday night, it was clear that most of us would not even be able to get to Omaha. More importantly, we realized that the health risk to each other and the people around us was too great, and was getting worse by the day.

Our contract with the Hilton Omaha had a very specific “force majeure” clause that allowed either party to cancel the contract without financial penalty. As of last Thursday, despite the national crisis, circumstances had not risen to the level that would allow us to cancel without being contractually obligated to pay damages, i.e. most of the Hilton’s expected revenue from the event, over \$30,000. To try to avoid this loss, our Convention Director, Emma Lynn, reached out to the Hilton to request that we be allowed to reschedule Convention. Our hotel contacts were very understanding, and we began exploring options for new dates.

On Monday, March 16th, the Governor of the State of Nebraska imposed emergency restrictions on the size of public gatherings. This official action finally triggered our contract’s force majeure clause, and the Hilton Omaha agreed to cancel outright and without penalty. Without the financial burden we previously faced, we are no longer pressured to hold Convention to avoid paying contractual damages to the hotel.

We are still working with the hotel to find possible dates for the 73rd Convention this summer. Alpha Rho Chi has never held a true summer convention. The closest we ever came to summer was the 22nd convention, held 70 years ago on June 17-19 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. With the vast uncertainty of the pandemic, we don’t yet know if rescheduling is an option. If we can’t meet in person, we will figure out another means of holding elections and conducting fraternity business. As soon as we have more information to share, we will announce the news.

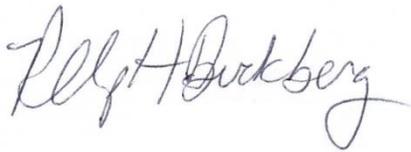
Now for some action items:

- If you are able, please be patient until we determine whether or not we will reschedule Convention. Rest assured that we will refund your registration fee or apply it to a rescheduled Convention if you choose to attend.
- If you made reservations at the Hilton Omaha, you should have received an email from the hotel that your reservation has been canceled. If you didn't receive a cancellation notice, make sure to cancel your reservation online or via phone by Monday, March 23.
- If you planned to fly to Omaha, check with your airline about credits or refunds, as most airlines have instituted temporary policies based on the current situation.

We are aware that all of our lives have been upended, perhaps none more so than our collegiate brothers who have to leave campus for the remainder of the year and take classes online. Our seniors may miss out on graduation ceremonies and other end-of-school traditions. We can only hope that our losses are no worse than that. Please stay healthy.

Thank you to our amazing brotherhood for your patience and support while we work through this unprecedented situation. Alpha Rho Chi remains strong, and we hope you will too. Our chapters and alumni associations are finding innovative ways to keep the lights on, even while socially distancing. Let's stay in touch throughout this pandemic, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Fidelitas, Amor et Artes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Buckberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil Buckberg
Worthy Grand Architect