

129th Continental Congress – Coronavirus Update

April 1, 2020

Message from President General Denise Doring VanBuren:

I express my sincere appreciation to all of you who are working on the front lines during the [Coronavirus](#) response efforts and for all who are staying at home so that we can slow the spread of the pandemic. Our number one priority is the health of our members and our communities during this national emergency.

We are all understandably concerned about the ability to convene the 129th Continental Congress in three months. Please be assured that we are closely monitoring all the [latest developments](#) to consider what is safest for our members, what will be allowed and how we must plan for contingencies. At this time, it is still our intention to stage the 129th Continental Congress in Washington, D.C., June 24-28, 2020. As the government has continued guidance to follow social distancing requirements through all of April, a final decision will be made and announced to members on or before May 1, 2020, as to whether or not Congress will be held at Headquarters, delayed or modified to be held as a virtual experience.

I appreciate those of you who have expressed hope that our nation will heal and that we will be able to hold Congress. Like many of you, I have come to envision Continental Congress as the light at the end of this dark tunnel; something we can set our sights on and look forward to during this difficult time. However, it is my responsibility to examine and balance all the factors with which we are dealing in order to decide whether we can safely stage our annual conference. It will be a very difficult choice regardless of what is ultimately decided because I know there are feelings on both sides; be assured it will be made based on the best information and guidance from the nation's scientists and federal/local officials, with our ultimate concern being the safety of the membership.

As planning for the 129th Continental Congress continues, I can assure you that if we are unable to stage Congress, any payments provided to National Headquarters will be refunded as follows:

Credentials and Pre-Registration

Those who make their payment for Congress Credentials and Pre-registration will be issued a full refund if Congress is ultimately canceled. Checks from each chapter will be voided or refunded, and Chapter Regents will be responsible for dispersing individual refunds to the appropriate members in their chapters. Note that the postmark deadline to send in Congress Credentials remains April 15, as dictated by the National Bylaws.

Congressional Voting

Plans are being developed to conduct an electronic election for the Office of Vice President General, Honorary Vice President General and any other necessary voting responsibilities if necessary. Members will be allowed to vote electronically only if their credentials are sent into Headquarters postmarked by the April 15 deadline.

Congress Social Events

National events for which members register and pay electronically with credit cards using Eventbrite, will receive a full refund for tickets if Congress is not held. For those national events that require payment by check, those checks will be held until the final decision about Congress is made; if Congress is canceled, checks will be voided.

State events will be responsible for handling the cancellation and logistics of refunds for their own events. Members must contact those individual state event organizers to inquire about the applicable refund policies.

State Bus Parking Fees

States that register and pay for their state bus to park at Headquarters can expect any checks sent to the National Society to be voided or fully refunded if Congress is unable to be held. Each state will be responsible for nullifying its own bus contract and redistributing individual payments to members.

Grand Hyatt Hotel Reservations

Currently, members pay a \$100 non-refundable deposit to make a room reservation at the DAR convention hotel, the Grand Hyatt. That deposit is applied to the room fee unless a member cancels her room reservation prior to April 15. If members cancel their hotel rooms after the April 15 cancellation deadline, then they are charged a \$350 fee. However, if Congress is canceled due to Coronavirus concerns and members are forced to cancel their Grand Hyatt hotel room reservations after April 15, both of these cancellation fees will be waived. Members must still follow Grand Hyatt cancellation policies and cancel their room 48 hours prior to their check in date in order to avoid a one-night room charge.

We all recognize that much of our decision will be tied to how well America heals during the month of April. I hope that all of America will commit to social distancing, adhere to precautionary hygiene and follow other important recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), so that we can slow the spread of the virus, save lives and return to our normal way of life. We are in this together, and together we will Rise and Shine for America.

Denise Doring VanBuren
President General