



International Festivals & Events Association

World Headquarters
2603 Eastover Terrace, Boise, Idaho, USA, 83706
Telephone: 208-433-0950 Fax: 208-433-9812
www.ifea.com

February 17, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Obama,

I am writing in my role as the President & CEO of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA), *The Premiere Association Supporting and Enabling Event Professionals Worldwide*. Like you, we are concerned with the current economic crisis and how our industry may best weather the storm and be part of a quicker solution. While our challenges are unparalleled, we are confident that they are not insurmountable and I offer my personal support and that of our unique industry in helping us all to achieve new pinnacles of success and possibilities.

In this time of economic uncertainty, our industry – the industry of celebration – has felt the impact as strongly as any other, with cutbacks in critical corporate sponsorships and support, municipal and government services, and travel by both families and individuals; coupled with new and rising costs for event insurance, security, taxes, permits, venues, entertainment and other budget-sensitive line-items. We have seen employee layoffs, business closures, and decreases in volunteer hours and discretionary giving. But we have never lost sight of the especially important and crucial role that we play at the grass roots level in every community, city, state and country.

Much as we saw following the attacks of 9/11 and in recognition of other history changing conflicts; as we have seen and shared during the Olympic Games or the Super Bowl; and as we recently saw emphasized during your own inauguration in Washington, across the country and around the world, events and celebrations - locally and globally - have the unique ability to bond people, communities and countries together; to remind us of all we have to celebrate and be proud of; and to convey a message of optimism and partnership, often in the face of great uncertainty.

Events and celebrations provide the ideal stimulus model: helping to drive over one trillion dollars in economic impact annually while enhancing our quality of life; employing millions of middle income workers directly and through the vendors and suppliers to our industry; supporting businesses both small and large; building community and encouraging investment in those communities at every level; encouraging inclusiveness and diversity; providing both psychological and physical “calling cards” for host cities, states and countries; offering educational platforms in a non-threatening environment; providing leadership in clean and green programs; and maximizing community volunteerism and training that feeds throughout countless other grass roots organizations and causes every day.

At a time when partisanship and pessimism threaten to divide us and prevent us from moving forward constructively, I encourage you to consider how your administration and stimulus package may be able to support this unique industry that is equitable beyond any other, and designed by purpose to bring us all together. This can be done directly, through financial infusion and the creation of a community development fund directed at the creation, development and support of local events, as well as insuring the infrastructure - venues, facilities, stadiums, auditoriums and public space - used by those same celebrations; and indirectly, by openly encouraging (from your level), approving and even rewarding investments by corporate industries and businesses of all sizes in these important community and country building celebrations.

I can promise you that our industry, with the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA) and our alliance partners across the spectrum of events riding point, will work tirelessly by your side to achieve the vision that we all believe is possible and to insure that our common future is something special to celebrate.

I thank you for your time and serious consideration. Please let me know how we can assist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven Wood Schmader". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "S" that loops back under the rest of the name.

Steven Wood Schmader, CFEE
President & CEO
IFEA World



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February 26, 2009

Dear Member of Congress,

I am writing in my role as the President & CEO of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFE A), *The Premiere Association Supporting and Enabling Event Professionals Worldwide*. Like you, we are concerned with the current economic crisis and how our industry may best weather the storm and be part of a quicker solution. While our challenges are unparalleled, we are confident that they are not insurmountable and I offer my personal support and that of our unique industry in helping us all to achieve new pinnacles of success and possibilities.

Our most immediate concern comes from the potentially damaging ramifications resulting from well-intentioned Congressional responses to abuses by those receiving TARP funds, such as Senator Kerry's TARP Taxpayer Protection and Corporate Responsibility Act. While we are on the same page as most citizens who believe that we are, and should be, operating in a new era of corporate responsibility and share a common disapproval of blatant abuses, we raise extreme caution regarding the tendency to group all scenarios and practices together. This type of knee-jerk reaction is making the proper use of sponsorships, employee motivation/incentive programs, and necessary business marketing, travel and meetings a perceptual misstep, with punishment for all, but with no clear delineation, recognition, or encouragement of the many acceptable models that in fact, continue to drive our economic stability and recovery. This type of over-reaction will only serve to create and feed a witch-hunt mentality that will harm many innocent organizations and businesses that do not need any further hurdles to clear, given our current and substantial challenges.

In this time of economic uncertainty, our industry – the industry of celebration – has felt the impact as strongly as any other. We have seen cutbacks in critical corporate sponsorships and support (some resulting from the direct impact of the economic downturn, with others resulting simply from the new fear of misperception and punishment), municipal and government services (as those bodies do battle with their own budgets), and travel by both families and

individuals. These challenges have been coupled with new and rising costs for event insurance, security, taxes, permits, venues, entertainment and other budget-sensitive line-items. We have seen employee layoffs, business closures, and decreases in volunteer hours and discretionary giving. But despite these very real concerns, we have never lost sight of the especially important and crucial role that we play at the grass roots level in every community, city, state and country.

Much as we saw following the attacks of 9/11 and in recognition of other history changing conflicts; as we have seen and shared during the Olympic Games or the Super Bowl; and as we recently saw emphasized during President Obama's inauguration in Washington, across the country and around the world, events and celebrations - locally and globally - have the unique ability to bond people, communities and countries together; to remind us of all we have to celebrate and be proud of; and to convey a message of optimism, partnership and normalcy, often in the face of great uncertainty. We cannot play this important role, however, if we lose the support of our critical supporters and sponsors, who are fearful of being clumped together with corporate abusers in the minds of congress and the public.

In fact, events and celebrations provide the ideal stimulus model: helping to drive over one trillion dollars in economic impact annually while enhancing the quality of life for our citizens and visitors; employing millions of middle income workers directly and through the vendors and suppliers to our industry; supporting businesses both small and large; building community and encouraging investment in those communities at every level; encouraging inclusiveness and diversity; providing both psychological and physical "calling cards" for host cities, states and countries; offering educational platforms in a non-threatening environment; providing leadership in clean and green programs; and maximizing community volunteerism and training that feeds throughout countless other grass roots organizations and causes every day.

What we need now is the help and partnership of our government officials, yourself included, to clearly delineate the difference between abuse and stimulus; to openly encourage the continued corporate and government support of events, business meetings and employee incentive programs that are non-abusive, nor reliant on TARP funds; to approve of and promote legitimate marketing programs and sponsorships that provide a powerful and cost-efficient return-on-investment through increased retail and business-to-business sales and branding efforts; and to encourage direct economic stimulus aimed at the important community programs, event organizations and their related industries that need it now more than ever.

While partisanship and pessimism can often divide us and prevent us from moving forward constructively, now is the time for us all to work together. I encourage you to consider how our government and your office might use the new stimulus package and the influence that you wield personally to help support

and protect this unique industry that is equitable beyond any other, and designed by purpose to bring our communities and country together. This can be done directly, through financial infusion and the creation of community development funds directed at the creation, development and support of local events, as well as insuring the infrastructure - venues, facilities, stadiums, auditoriums and public space - used by those same celebrations; and indirectly, by openly encouraging, approving of and even rewarding investments by corporate industries and businesses of all sizes in these important community and country building celebrations.

I thank you for your serious consideration and response to these concerns and opportunities, and for helping to insure that common sense prevails over first-pass reactions. I can promise you that our industry, with the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA) and our alliance partners across the spectrum of events riding point, will work tirelessly by your side to achieve the vision that we all believe is possible and to insure that our common future is something special to celebrate.

Please let me know how we can assist.

Sincerely,

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Steven Wood Schmader, CFEE
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