



2022 Reunion Preliminary Information

How COVID Constraints Could Interfere With Our 2022 Reunion

Howard Dobson
Reunion Planner
07 Jan 2022

PREFACE

I ANTICIPATE THAT OUR 2022 REUNION IN OMAHA, NEB. WILL OCCUR AS PLANNED FOR 08-10 SEP 2022 WITHOUT COVID CONSTRAINTS. BUT POSTPONEMENT WILL BE LIKELY IF INFORMATION WOULD INDICATE THAT COVID CONSTRAINTS WILL EXIST OR MIGHT HAVE A HIGH PROBABILITY OF EXISTING AROUND THE TIME OF THE REUNION.

IF YOU INTEND TO REGISTER FOR OUR 2022 REUNION, I WANT YOU TO BE AWARE OF TWO SITUATIONS THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION ABOUT ATTENDING THE REUNION:

- A NEED TO PROVIDE PROOF OF COVID VACCINATIONS AND BOOSTERS OR PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION THAT SUPPORTS AN APPROVED VACCINATION EXEMPTION.
- A POSTPONMENT OF THE 2022 REUNION MIGHT OCCUR AT ANY TIME BECAUSE OF COVID CONSTRAINTS BEING IMPOSED FOR TRAVEL, INDOOR EVENTS, OR CROWD-CAPACITY LIMITS.

THE DETAILS THAT FOLLOW CONSIST OF FACTS AND SOME OF MY SUPPOSITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. YOU WILL EASILY DETERMINE WHICH ALTERNATIVE APPLIES TO STATEMENTS.

You have undoubtedly experienced how COVID constraints have disrupted your daily life. Circumstances related to COVID are unstable and unpredictable, and they have the potential of interfering with travel to and from our reunion as well as with our reunion activities. ***This situation can result in my postponing the 2022 reunion should information existing at mid-July 2022 suggest that COVID constraints—as they were on 01 Jan 2022—would be effective for our reunion.*** I'll do my best to stay aware of mandates and policies that can interfere with the conduct of our 2022 reunion and related travel via public transportation. If postponing the reunion becomes necessary or I otherwise judge postponement to be prudent, I will postpone the reunion. I'll do my best to decide by mid-July 2022 to minimize inconveniences to those who intend to register for the reunion or will have registered. ***Therefore, if you are contemplating attending the 2022 reunion, I recommend that you neither purchase airfare nor train fare until after mid-July 2022 unless you will have a high probability of using that fare for other necessary travel before that fare would be forfeited.***

For our reunions to be enjoyable and memorable, all aspects of the reunions must be trouble-free. COVID constraints can interfere with the comfort and pleasure of attending our reunions. Issues could begin long before arriving at the host hotel! These would be associated with travel by public transportation to the reunion city and would primarily involve a mask-wearing mandate. Depending upon how you might travel to an airport (or train station), you could be required to wear a mask immediately upon departure from your home and until you would arrive at your hotel guest room! The inconvenience of wearing a mask for many hours of travel could be the sole reason for choosing not to attend the 2022 reunion for some members or it could be a contributing factor. In either case, the result would be fewer reunion attendees than anticipated which has its own issues. ***If wearing a mask for lengthy periods is problematic for you, do not register for the reunion unless you determine that the mask-wearing mandate will be lifted or the time of wearing a mask would be minimized such that you can tolerate the time of wearing a mask.***

At mid-July, I will inform you if I intend to proceed with the 2022 reunion or postpone it. By then, I hope to have sufficient information regarding COVID which would provide a high degree of confidence that current restraints will likely be lifted or loosened such that any adversities related to reunion travel and activities will either be nonexistent or pose negligible concerns. The farther in advance of the 2022 reunion, the more difficult the decision to postpone the reunion is. I'll be monitoring the news media, the hospitality industry, and our tour venues closely for indications of a need to postpone the reunion.

Many factors are involved with the decision, and a decision in July to proceed with the reunion might not be final. One major factor is that COVID variants are cropping up and will continue to do so regardless of constraints and vaccinations. Variants can be worse than previous ones, pose the same problems, or be of little or no consequence. My top priority is the health and safety of our reunion attendees, and I will not hesitate to postpone the 2022 reunion if these would be jeopardized or if COVID-based constraints would pose unsympathetic inconveniences. Also, if an unexpected, new outbreak would occur, governments could initiate shutdowns as had occurred in early 2020. The overall situation surrounding COVID and its constraints is unpredictable.

COVID-RELATED CONSTRAINTS

The federal government is undoubtedly struggling to minimize the spread of COVID and claims that unvaccinated individuals are significant contributors to the spread. But to appease those who are eligible for the vaccination but have chosen not to receive it, the federal government has not issued a national vaccination mandate. But some government officials have acknowledged that the decision has failed to curb the spread of COVID for the most part. But I believe that the government is taking a backdoor approach to getting unvaccinated individuals to be vaccinated.

In October 2021, I attended a virtual conference that concerned COVID and its effects on the hospitality industry. The information presented was partially from a prominent attorney who specializes in the hospitality industry. One of his topics concerned some hotels considering implementing a mask-wearing mandate for their employees. The purpose: to minimize the spread of the coronavirus among employees. His information also concerned the possibility that these hotels might expand the mandate to include hotel guests and visitors. His assumption could have some merit. At issuance of this document, I am unaware of any hotel that has instituted a mask-wearing mandate for hotel guests and visitors. In my opinion, such a mandate would only be effective if all hotels in a widespread area (city, county, or larger) would implement the mandate for guests and visitors. Otherwise, travelers would seek nearby hotels that would not have the mandate. Nonetheless, I suspect that the mandate is not off the table and could become effective if the spread of COVID is not better curtailed soon.

While I was completing this document during the first week in 2022, the local TV newscasts [Philadelphia] stated that the city has mandated proof of COVID vaccinations and boosters for all indoor, public dining within the city. Indoor, public dining encompasses situations beyond businesses typically referred to as "restaurants." Three unsuspected situations are dining areas within sport arenas, fast food eateries, and food courts at malls. The list goes on! Additionally, the mandate prohibits unvaccinated individuals from indoor, public dining even if they have negative COVID-test

results. (A backdoor tactic?) Who knows how far-reaching this Philadelphia-dining mandate could grow!

My local newscasts mentioned that the federal government is considering a COVID-vaccination mandate for all domestic airline travel. It would be implemented in addition to its existing mask-wearing mandate. The news commentator said that the vaccination mandate could force a large portion of unvaccinated individuals to receive the vaccination. (Another backdoor tactic?) I would not be surprised if a federally mandated, COVID vaccination would be extended to train travel as those who do not want the vaccination would probably opt for rail travel.

The federal government instituted the mask-wearing mandate for air travel in mid-2021 although individual airlines had already imposed their own mandates that required mask to be worn while aboard aircraft. The federal, mask-wearing mandate also applies to travelers who are within airport terminals. The government has also issued similar mandates for rail and interstate-coach travel.

Ride share, taxi, and limousine services all have self-imposed, mask-wearing mandates, and some services have passenger limits. Local bus service in Wilmington, Del. has mask-wearing and social-distancing mandates instituted by the State of Delaware. Other state and local governments and privately owned, transportation services likely have similar mandates.

PROOF OF VACCINATIONS AND BOOSTERS

If you do not have COVID-vaccination documentation, you should seek that documentation as having it in your possession might become a requirement for many activities that do not require it now. The Vaccination Cards issued/updated for COVID vaccinations and boosters are approved documentation. If you do not have your card(s), you should begin your research on how to obtain replacements or other approved, vaccination-validation documentation. Different states have different means and locations for obtaining official replacement documentation. You'll probably need COVID-vaccination documentation for activities in your city of residence long before our reunion is scheduled.

If you are ineligible for the COVID vaccination and have a government-approved exemption, you would be required to have supportive documentation if a vaccination mandate would be implemented. For an approved exemption, periodic COVID tests are required in addition to the individual maintaining test-result documentation. Such tests must be those specified by the state or federal government. I suspect that COVID self-test kits which provide at-home results will not be considered "approved tests" even if their analytical method is one that the federal or state governments have approved (e.g., the PCR analysis). The reason I suspect that the kits will not be approved is that neither a means of validating the source of the sample nor the test result exists. Nevertheless, you must determine the documentation required and how to obtain it. You'll also likely need that documentation in your home area long before our reunion is scheduled if the federal, state, and local governments have their way. If a requirement for vaccination/exemption documentation is implemented and you will be maintaining that documentation for activities in your home area, having to provide that documentation for reunion-related travel and activities might not deter your decision to attend the reunion.

MASK AND SOCIAL-DISTANCING MANDATES

If the spread of COVID is not satisfactorily curtailed by the time of our reunion, attendees who would use public transportation could be wearing masks from the time they would leave their homes until they would arrive at their hotel guest rooms! I will postpone the reunion if information available to me by mid-July 2022 suggests that the mask-wearing mandates for travel during our reunion will remain as they were on 01 Jan 2022. I will probably not postpone the reunion if one or two of our tour venues would have mask-wearing mandates. An example would be our tour of Boys Town. This venue always has a concern for the health and safety of the children and their families who reside on the property.

Simply stated, we require closeness during our reunions while at a hotel—especially in our Hospitality Space. Wearing masks would be a nuisance at the least. We share memorabilia, pictures, and documents and discuss them and other stuff in proximity. We also consume beverages and eat snacks in our Hospitality Space. Dealing with removing and replacing our masks during these tasks would be more than a nuisance.

A requirement for social distancing can also pose serious issues within our Banquet Room. The hotel has selected meeting rooms that can comfortably accommodate the number of attendees for our events at the hotel. If a social-distancing mandate would be implemented at the hotel, we'll have a problem especially within our Banquet Room. If so, the probability would be high that the host hotel would not have a larger room available for our group because it will have placed another group in that larger room—if a larger room would exist. The result could be that we would require two banquet seatings: **absolutely unacceptable!** (The “other” group in a larger Banquet Room would encounter the same issues.) As yet, our host hotel and tour venues have no social-distance mandates.

Social-distancing and crowd-capacity limits aboard our tour coach can result in canceling the coach and all tours because the one coach would have become inadequate for the number of passengers. We would not be able to pay for a second coach even if one would be available. Also, if I would not cancel the coach well in advance of the reunion, we would neither qualify for a reimbursement nor be able to transfer the coach payment to a postponed reunion. Crowd-capacity limits could cause some of our tour venues not to be able to accommodate our group as established during the planning phase. This would require longer periods at those venues which would disorganize the remaining tour itinerary.

CLOSING

I hope that the reunion can occur with circumstances as they were before COVID. This includes travel to and from on public transportation without mask-wearing and social-distancing mandates. This is my hope, and if this would not be the case, I'll postpone the 2022 reunion.

With mask-wearing mandates as they were (or worse) on 01 Jan 2022 or if social distancing might be mandated during our reunion activities, reunion attendance would likely be significantly reduced. I'm striving to decide on proceeding with the reunion by mid-July 2022 so that those who wish to attend will have time to purchase airfares or train fares at decent prices. With a decision to proceed with the reunion comes the uncertainty of COVID constraints returning after that decision. It's a chance that I must take. But an existing mask-wearing mandate being effective in mid-July will probably be a sign that the COVID situation might have a fair probability of posing problems in September 2022. I will

postpone the reunion in mid-July if so. If the mask-wearing mandate is lifted by then, it might be a sign that things could be nearly normal by the time of the reunion.

On the favorable side, my local TV newscasts on 31 Dec 2021 had some good news regarding COVID: WHO (World Health Organization) has predicted that the year 2022 could end the COVID pandemic if those eligible for the COVID vaccination will received it. These newscasts had a section with videos of long lines at numerous COVID-vaccination stations with significant delays and depleted supplies of the vaccines. The individuals in those lines were unvaccinated individuals. This is evidence that the number of unvaccinated individuals is significantly decreasing: a situation that the federal government desires. Hopefully, the pandemic and related constraints will have been lifted by mid-July 2022. If not lifted then, perhaps I'll have sufficient data to acquire reasonable assurance that COVID constraints will be lifted by September 2022. If so, my decision in mid-July will be to proceed with the reunion. Otherwise, I'll postpone the reunion until September or October 2023.

I intend to issue the 2022 Reunion-Information Packet (RIP) between late February and mid-March 2022.

Howard Dobson

