

July 26, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards and Louisiana Leaders:

The American Historical Association, the largest professional association in the world for all historians, will hold its annual meeting in New Orleans in January 2022. Nearly 4,000 historians from the United States and abroad will attend, bringing millions of dollars in revenue and booking over 8,000 room nights in New Orleans hotels. Our conference will bring educational as well as business benefits to the state. In addition to sessions, tours, and talks focused on the history of New Orleans and the region, we will offer free conference registration to public school teachers from Orleans Parish to enable them to take advantage of professional development opportunities at the conference. We are excited to return to in-person meetings after cancelling our 2021 meeting due to the pandemic and to invite our members to join us in a city rich in history and culture.

We want to make our meeting as safe as possible for all to attend. We have been impressed by the clear policies, benchmarks, and data analytics established by New Orleans public health officials to ensure a safe return to business, including for large gatherings like our annual meeting. The Association has been encouraged by the city's progress in ensuring that its citizens are vaccinated, which enabled the New Orleans Health Department to ease restrictions on indoor gatherings. We are optimistic that the city will open conferences at full capacity in time for our meeting.

However, we note with alarm that vaccination rates in the state of Louisiana remain well below the national average and that the state is one of seven listed at high risk for an outbreak on the Centers for Disease Control COVID Tracker website. One popular consumer [publication](#) has listed Louisiana dead last in its rankings of "Safest States during COVID-19." Poor vaccine distribution and infection control at the state level affects risk at the city level; as of this writing the [COVID-19 New Orleans Dashboard](#) reports that Orleans Parish is at risk of an outbreak.

Our members read this readily available information. They email us; they are worried about whether it is safe to attend, safe to travel to Louisiana.

We know that city and state officials are eager to see business travel resume and travel industry jobs and revenue rebound, and we trust that you will mount a vigorous public health effort to increase vaccination rates and prevent a renewed surge of COVID cases, which would necessitate the reimposition of restrictions on conferences and business travel.

We appreciate the state's efforts to plan for a safe return to business and expect that you will continue to work to encourage vaccination so that it will be safe for us to meet in New Orleans.

Sincerely,



James R. Grossman
Executive Director

cc: Gov. John Bel Edwards
Mayor LaToya Cantrell
Doug Bourgeois, Assistant Secretary of Tourism
Jeff Harlan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Tourism
Dr. Courtney N. Phillips, State Secretary of Health
Sen. Regina Ashford Barrow
Sen. Fred H. Mills Jr.
Sen. Karen Carter Peterson
Rep. Larry Bagley
Rep. Aimee Freeman
Rep. Christopher Turner
City Councilperson Helena Moreno
Stephen Perry, New Orleans and Company
Donna Glover, New Orleans and Company
Mark Romig, New Orleans and Company