GUIDELINES NEEDED FROM CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR FOR BUSINESS MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS TO REOPEN
$4.1 billion lost each month resumption delayed, study concludes

VISALIA, CA. – (Mar. 26, 2021) – California is calling on Governor Newsom to immediately issue guidelines clarifying under what conditions business meetings, events and conventions in California can resume. Convention centers and hotel meeting spaces across the state have been shuttered since March 2020.

A report released in October 2020 concluded that California is losing $4.1 billion monthly in economic activity for every month the state delays opening for business meetings and events. The losses are directly attributable to the lack of meetings, many of which are held at hotels, according to the "Economic Impact of Meetings in California 2020" Oxford Economics study.

The loss of meetings has had a severe impact on the Tulare County hotels and hospitality industry employees. More than 4,600 local tourism jobs have been affected due to the global pandemic and continued economic shutdown. With hotel stays down, Transient Occupancy Tax during the height of the pandemic (Mar-Jun 2020) fell 56%.

In 2019, Visalia meetings and conventions contributed an estimated $34 million in economic impact to the region, stated Shelley Albanese, General Manager of the Visalia Convention Center. Since the shutdown in March of 2020, that number has plummeted to nearly zero.

"It will take some time for Visalia to return to pre-pandemic levels," said Nellie Freeborn, executive director of Visit Visalia. "We are losing business to states that already allow meetings and sports tournaments to occur, making it even more difficult to bring the business back."

Destination cities such as Orlando, Dallas, Seattle, San Antonio and Las Vegas, which recently approved hosting meetings up to 1,000 people, have reopened for individual meetings, putting California businesses at long-term risk.

"Our hotels are safe for guests, employees and meetings," said Lynn S. Mohrfeld, President and CEO of the California Hotel and Lodging Association. "We implemented health protocols, trained our employees and have the protective gear to ensure the well-being of meeting attendees. It's time California allows individual meetings to resume."

At Visit Visalia, meeting clients are having to change plans due to the lack of guidance from the state. "I do believe we could have done something safely in the [Visalia] exhibit hall if California would look at other states' policies and see what can be done safely," said Rodger W. Meier, State Adjutant/ Quartermaster from VFW Department of California, who had to cancel the organization's annual State Convention scheduled for Visalia.

Though the state has yet to release guidelines of its own, Visit Visalia is working with the Visalia Convention Center and the adjacent Visalia Marriott Hotel to host a Demonstration Day on April 7 for elected officials and the media. The event will show how prepared Visalia hotels and meeting venues are to host individual meetings safely and effectively. The Visalia Convention Center is accredited by Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC) STAR, the gold standard for

prepared facilities and has implemented their stringent protocols for cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention.

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ABOUT VISIT VISALIA:
Visit Visalia is a collaboration of the Visalia Tourism Marketing District and the Visalia Convention and Visitors Bureau (VCVB) dedicated to marketing, advertising, public relations and other promotional efforts that inspire travel to the City of Visalia. Visit Visalia works closely with local lodging properties, restaurants and attractions to foster interest in Visalia as a year-round destination for leisure, family, and meeting and convention travelers. For more information about Visit Visalia go to www.VisitVisalia.com and follow Visit Visalia on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest