



RICH CROCE
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
COUNCIL OF INDUSTRY
AND PRESIDENT
VIKING INDUSTRIES

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

The most striking thing to happen to all of us in the last year and a half was being alone. Quarantine was a word that took on a much more powerful meaning. Many felt lost and helpless. For the members of the Council of Industry we found a place to be together and not be alone. Together we helped each other provide a safe work environment for our thousands of employees. Together we reminded everyone of the products we make that are often taken for granted. Together we look to the future as the members of the Council of Industry build their businesses stronger than before.

Most of us entered the Spring of 2020 wondering how to respond to a virus and constantly changing guidelines. Family businesses were unable to turn to the previous generations or other mentors and ask, "How did you deal with this when it happened to you?" No one had dealt with this in the last hundred years. The Council of Industry was there to help distribute and decipher the information that was coming in fast and furious with their COVID daily briefing. Members connected to assure each other we were not alone. We shared best practices and learned from each other at 21st century speed. Our employees and their families are thankful we had each other and an association like this to help plot a course through a difficult year.

2020 provided us a new definition of what it meant to be essential. Shopping for toilet paper was less about price and choice and all about availability. Personal protective equipment like masks and gloves became a daily necessity. Our members pivoted to provide critical items to our community quickly and affordably. Never was it more important to have a supply chain of materials close to where the community needed them. The perception of our factories changed to facilities providing critically needed items with the help of technology. Their Staff, families and children will speak of them with pride at their great contributions of lifting our communities out of this pandemic.

The togetherness and unity I have felt in the last 18 months with the Council of Industry members fills me with such hope for the future. With all the challenges we faced, the Council was there to provide connection, resources and advocacy to ensure we would be able to open our doors, safely, tomorrow and the next day. We have new challenges today, and the Council is here to guide us through them. We will have different challenges tomorrow and I know the members will come together to help each other again. The value of membership in the Council of Industry has never been higher than it is right now. Manufacturing is essential and the Council allows us to speak with a common, powerful voice to ensure the community understands just how essential we are.

I would like to conclude by thanking Harold and Johnnieanne for all they did and continue to do to help the organizations, leaders and staff at all of the member companies. I would also like to thank all the leaders of other organizations who have helped me during the past year and will be there for me should I need help again. Just like those who have helped me, I will be sure to be available to anyone out there who thinks I may be able to help them. We are not alone and never have been. We have each other and always will.

Regards,

Chairman of the Board