



**Society of Air Force Nurses, Inc.
Letter to the Membership
13 Oct 2017**

1. Due to Hurricane Irma, the 2017 SAFN Convention at Sea did not sail. Besides not being able to gather in friendship, it also caused some business of the Society to not get completed. One item was the induction ceremony of the elected officers. The Committee on Bylaws (COB) wrote a suggested change, the SAFN lawyer was consulted and the Executive Committee (EC) held a teleconference to discuss the recommended change. After the EC agreement, the Board of Directors (BOD) held a teleconference and voted to approve the recommendation. Below in bold print you can read the recommendation:

The Board of Directors (BOD) has agreed with the recommendation of the Executive Committee that assumption of duties of the newly elected officers that would normally have occurred during the 2017 National Convention, as directed by SAFN Bylaw Article III, Section 5 - ELECTIONS, should take place on 1 October 2017, in order to adequately conduct the association's business. The BOD understands and confirms, that this action is a deviation from Robert's Rules guidance for dealing with bylaw changes, and will quickly work to put forth a formal submission to amend the affected bylaw, so that in the future, it will allow for assumption of duties of the elected officials during the national convention as is already stated in the bylaw, or on a designated date to be determined, whichever comes sooner. The general membership will then be provided an opportunity to vote on the proposed amendment as soon as possible per Robert's Rules guidance for bylaw amendment. In addition, in the interest of transparency, an article for the Rendezvous that describes this BOD action will be placed in the next edition of the Rendezvous.

2. The 2017 convention was not cancelled, it was moved to June 2-9, 2018. SAFN Sails the Seas Déjà Vu" is the same as the one postponed from September. The June 2 sailing was the earliest date that would work for our group due to the amount of conference room space and number of staterooms needed. There has been some concern mentioned about the ports we will be visiting. It will be almost nine months between the hurricanes destruction and our scheduled departure. It's impossible to know today if the islands' repairs will be completed enough for our ship to visit the scheduled port; however, Royal Caribbean (RC) will advise us of any itinerary changes if they become necessary. This is the message that was sent on 24 September, from RC "Given Hurricane Irma's impact to St. Maarten and St. Thomas, as well as Hurricane Maria's impact to San Juan, we are altering ports for future sailings until these islands have fully recovered. As the recovery effort remains fluid and each island is working diligently

to get back to normal operations, we will continue to communicate any port changes approximately four weeks prior to departure. Additionally, we are happy to announce that we received confirmation that we can return to Key West starting today.” Considering the damage Key West received and its ability to already welcome cruise ships, Susan Pretkus-Combs, Cruise Specialist and Kay Fryman, Convention Chairperson, believe most of the islands scheduled to visit will be ready by June. One of the reasons Royal Caribbean was selected for the cruise was the ship, specifically one of the Oasis class ships. Besides being the largest ship at sea, it is the most innovative and beautiful. The entertainment is truly incredible, with Broadway-caliber musicals “Grease” and original comedy “Columbus;” full-production Ice Skating Shows and Aqua Theatre Shows; and comedy club, variety shows, Jazz Club and musical acts. The Ship is a destination vacation on its own no matter which islands are visited – in fact, many passengers choose to stay onboard.

Everyone from our original September 9 date was tentatively moved to the June 2, 2018 sailing because it was the best way for RC to handle our group, since we chose not to continue on the shortened version of the cruise and wanted to reschedule the group. RC is not providing a refund to those who chose not to sail – RC is providing a future cruise credit in the amount of the base cruise fare and is refunding everything purchased directly by individuals through their cruise planners. Everything purchased in addition to the cruise fare at the group level through Dream Vacations (i.e. gratuities, SAFN convention fee, private shore excursion in San Juan, transfers) has been retained by RC for now, along with the cruise fares paid, for the rescheduling of the group to the future date. Those who cancel outright will receive the future cruise credit for the cruise fare plus reimbursement of items other than the cruise fare. If they don’t believe they can use the cruise credit within the year provided for its use, then they must file a claim for reimbursement with their insurance provider.

There have been 13 registered guests who have asked to cancel outright as of 27 September. Some of these said they still may be able to attend but due to the way their insurance was worded they preferred to file for refunds now and decide later. There have also been 13 potential returnees who were unable to go in September 2017 but have submitted registration requests for this cruise in June. Plus, 13 new prospects (not listed previously) who have asked for more information to register for the June 2 cruise. In summary, for the June, 2018 sailing, 13 registered guests are currently unable to attend and 26 not currently registered guests are asking for registration information. That would give the June 2018 sailing 13 more potential attendees than on the original September 2017 date.

Another question that was discussed by the BOD was whether we should cancel the convention and just have a SAFN cruise? The bylaws read, Section 3 Membership, “a biennial meeting of the membership shall be held at the call of the BOD at such a place as they deem suitable.” If the decision to cancel the convention is made, another bylaw change would need to be added to the list of bylaws to amend. We would also have to add an explanation to the treasury logs to justify expenses that some members have incurred for the cancelled convention. Plus, it would be a disappointment to our members who had planned on and paid to go on this cruise convention and incredible ship.

A suggestion was made that instead of cancelling the convention, add one day to the June 2018 convention dates and not hold the BOD meeting scheduled for October, 2018, in San Antonio, TX. In so doing, the business of the Society would be able to be completed and travel expenses would be decreased significantly. This is what we plan to do.

Having the convention in June 2018 should not impact region meetings. The only date scheduled today is 28-31 October 2018 for SE, so with a June convention the regions can work around the June date.

3. Sorry to get this letter to you so late. Susan and I have been working for weeks to get as much information about the June 2-9, 2018 sailing fares as possible, and other information about moving to June. The latest fares for the June 2 sailing for those who were originally booked on the 9/9/17 cruise are attached. The balcony staterooms will pay an additional \$40 - \$80 more per person, with another 21 passengers paying \$180 more per person, and a few paying somewhere in between. ALL of the fares are at an average of \$300 LESS than the new fares that were quoted when we moved from Allure to Harmony (the new fares are what guests paid who weren't already registered before the ships were switched). The reason fare differences differ among reservations is because some members booked later during different fare promotions after our group fares expired. The fares for new guests have not been released yet, but will be communicated very soon.

4. Another area that was considered for the move to June was the pricing for the Embassy Suites for two nights pre-cruise for both the June 2 and April 21 dates (there was a possibility of moving the cruise to April but costs would have been much higher, so it is no longer being considered).

They have availability for both, but a big difference in rates as follows:

- A. April 21st, 2018: \$229.00 p/night + 11% tax...Kings or Doubles.
- B. June 2nd, 2018: \$134.00 p/night + 11% tax ...Kings or Doubles.

5. Airfare was another consideration. After checking flights from 5 of the most popular airports, they are \$50 - \$120 less on the June dates than the April dates. That's because April is the tail end of the high season in Florida, and June is the low season.

6. On another note, Royal is making progress on credits back to cards that were used for them. For those members who were originally scheduled to sail on Harmony of the Seas on 9/9/17:

Royal Caribbean is making progress on reimbursing everyone for the following items which were NOT included in your Future Cruise Certificates:

Taxes

Gratuities

\$25 SAFN Fee (which was included in your cruise fare)

(Above are on everyone's reservations)

\$16.75 Transfers

\$55 Private Shore Excursion in San Juan

(For those who booked the above items, only)

Cruise Planner purchases

Gift Purchases

Dining and Beverage Purchases (including Chef's Table)

Spa Purchases

Other Purchases

(For those who booked them, only)

All the above are being reimbursed to the cards that they were originally charged to. (If your bank has issued a new card number to replace the original one since then, don't worry -- they have an amazing way of finding each other!) Royal Caribbean is working feverishly to complete the refunds, which are handled by various depts. at Royal and must be done manually for groups such as ours. They have many thousands of refunds to make since the hurricanes and are doing the best they can to expedite without making errors. Refunds will not be made in one singular amount. Some will come through grouped together, and some as individual charges, so members will need to track their credit cards to ensure all refunds are received. Susan Pretkus-Combs, our cruise consultant, receives no confirmations of your individual refunds, so she recommends you refer to your final invoices (for a list of the items she charged on your behalf) and your Cruise Planner summaries (for a list of the items you charged directly with Royal Caribbean) to ensure every item purchased is accounted for with the refunds. The only items you will not see refunded are the base cruise fare, for which Royal Caribbean distributed the Future Cruise Certificates (FCC), and the \$15 transfer charge between the hotel and ship. Both of these amounts are being transferred to your new cruise reservation. The base cruise fare is shown on your Dream Vacations invoice combined with the \$25 SAFN Convention fee, so you would subtract the \$25 fee (which is being refunded) from the cruise fare shown to see the value of your FCC. When the reservation process reopens for the new sail date, the additional items that were refunded will need to be recharged again. More details to come regarding that process, which we hope to streamline the second time around. Those who must cancel need to file for an insurance claim. If your insurance was purchased through Susan at Dream Vacations, please contact her for instructions. Thank you for your patience!

Kay Fryman

SAFN President

2017 Convention Chair