

The following letter was written by the Supple Restaurant Group and was emailed to members of the Winnebago County Board, Oshkosh Common Council, Tavern League, Wisconsin Restaurant Association and all area State and Federal Legislative representatives on behalf of the Supple Family regarding Golden Corral and as a cautionary tale of the reality our industry is facing. This message should hit home for every small business person that has laid it on the line and invested it all to realize their dream of owning a business. Over the past several months, the Oshkosh Chamber has advocated on behalf of its members in an effort to maintain business operations. We have also urged member business to be responsible by putting in place protocols to ensure the safety of your employees and customers. We challenged you all, and you responded, to not only meet the CDC standards but to exceed those standards. We see evidence of this every day in places of business throughout the community. Unfortunately, state and local units of government continue to look for ways to impose restrictions on business operations. As a business organization, we will continue to challenge and oppose those efforts. An adjoining article discusses our response to the most current attempt by Winnebago County to restrain business trade. The letter from the Supple Family provides the rationale why the Oshkosh Chamber aggressively opposes government over-reach. We all want this to go away. We continue to urge you all to implement the necessary protocols to maintain a safe business environment. Business people are truly concerned about the well-being of their families, employees and customers. However, we cannot allow the lifeblood of the community to go dark.

*John Casper
President & CEO*

The Harsh Reality of Legislative Decisions

Safer at home, curfew, reduced occupancy, a complete ban of bars & restaurants. On paper it makes sense. We all want to flatten the curve, eliminate the spike, and get through this pandemic. But when Governors, federal and state legislatures, county executives, and city councils pass mandates and rules sitting behind a desk or at home in their chairs, it is important that they are fully aware of the harsh reality that comes after these decisions.

- Wages totaling \$821,092.25 paid out to 96 employees over a year – done.
- Real Estate taxes paid out \$52,141.22 over a year, over \$750,000 since opening in 2006 – done.
- Countless donations for school fundraisers, church picnics, nonprofit events, sports team sponsorships all benefiting the local community – done.
- Thirty-five employees lost their jobs on Monday. Their income and their health insurance. – done

That is the harsh reality when a long-time local restaurant is operating with less than 35 percent of its sales over last year. Due to legislative decisions, media exposure, and a pandemic.

A restaurant group that has been in business since 1968 in Oshkosh, supporting the community and employing thousands of people through the years, we closed Golden Corral Oshkosh on Monday indefinitely. If you are a publicly elected official, or a publicly paid employee, have you ever had to worry about your paycheck being reduced 75%? If you have ever owned a business and were

responsible for making sure that your employees received their paycheck every week, have you ever been told that you were only going to receive 25 percent of your annual revenue and that was all you had to run your business, pay your employees, your rent, mortgage, utilities, taxes, and inventory?

Publicly elected officials have a responsibility to protect all of their constituents, and that absolutely means their health, but it also includes all constituents and the businesses they own. When any business put together a business plan, they estimated sales, wages, and expenses, including those paid to their local municipalities. Federal, state, or local mandates and occupancy or curfew restrictions significantly reduce top-line revenue, but when those are made, there is no comparable adjustment to financial obligations owed to those same government entities. Property taxes aren't reduced, municipal utilities aren't reduced.

Independent, locally-owned restaurants, bars, and retail stores have born the greatest financial burden of pandemic shutdown and regulations. Large retailers, grocery stores, and manufacturers are not impacted by these restrictions and many have actually seen large increases in their revenues and bottom lines. Some industries cannot operate under shelter at homes and similar restrictions. These businesses cannot operate remotely from their homes, and if the doors are not open, there is no revenue coming in. We don't fight to stay open because we don't care about everyone's health. We fight for everyone's health every day by protecting our staff with masks, and sanitization measures that are significantly greater than most large retailers, so we often don't know why we as a,n industry, are singled out.

But these same independent, locally-owned restaurants, bars, and retail stores are the heart of the communities you represent. They are the ones that you go to for donations for church picnics, school fundraisers, non-profit events and so many more. They are the place your children get their first jobs, or a single parent may pick up a second job. They are the heartbeat of every community. And one more just stopped beating.

Publicly elected officials have a difficult job, but don't forget to look at the big picture and be aware of the harsh reality of your decisions. Imagine if your boss just reduced your pay by 75 percent. Our industry is not "unlucky". We are targeted and being damaged beyond repair with no lifeline in sight. Political parties are at odds and keep stalling on fiscal help that if it comes may be too late for so many.

Never forget your decisions have implications that reach far beyond the immediate issue at hand, so please be fully aware of the harsh reality of your legislative decisions.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

The Supple Family