

editor's LETTER

THE WOMAN WHO FOUGHT FOR TEXAS DMCS AND WON

IT SEEMS AN APPROPRIATE time to tell you about Laurie Sprouse, CMP, DMCP, CITE and president of Ultimate Ventures, a Dallas-Fort Worth DMC she founded more than 17 years ago.

Texas DMCs owe Sprouse a debt of gratitude. When the Texas comptroller's office initiated a rule that would have reclassified destination management companies as resellers and forced them to charge sales tax on their profit margin, Sprouse swung into action in 2007. Additionally, the corporate franchise tax formula had been changed, effective in 2008, requiring DMCs to pay \$7,000 in tax per \$1 million in gross revenue regardless of whether the business was profitable.

There are about 20 DMCs in Texas, most of them small businesses owned by women. But these businesses are responsible for 1,400 jobs and pay about \$9 million in salaries annually. These companies are instrumental to the meetings and conventions industry, and the tax could have discouraged groups from meeting in Texas.

The two proposed tax changes were potentially devastating to DMCs. Through the Association of Destination Management Executives, Sprouse led efforts to create a tax task force, and ultimately her efforts to head off these changes were successful through

legislation. Now Texas is the first state with a definition for a "qualified destination management company," setting a precedent for other states. Even press releases about her relentless efforts read like a thrilling novel.

Few have had as big an impact on the Texas meetings and events industry in recent years as Sprouse. But as we induct our newest *Texas Meetings + Events* Hall of Fame nominees, featured in this issue, you won't find Laurie Sprouse among them—at least, not this year. That's because, as seems to be typical with Sprouse, she is quietly working behind the scenes on this magazine's editorial advisory board and is not eligible for nomination to the hall of fame while she serves on the board that is

responsible for selecting nominees.

Still, if you run across Sprouse at meetings or events, or perhaps working tirelessly on ADME's Standards Task Force, as she has for the past two years, give her an "atta girl." She deserves recognition and thanks for the differences she's made in our industry.



Robin Fowler

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