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CAI president's message: Cynthia, what is your perspective?

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Pandemic rules are frustrating. I do not want to wear a mask wherever I go and I want to be able to go places. As I write this message, Massachusetts has promulgated six pages of rules just to re-open swimming pools, court deadlines are suspended until July 1st and certain lawsuits can't be filed or won't be considered – enough already. I want to go back to the freedoms that I am guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States; but on the other hand, I don't want to get sick either. Wait a minute! Is living this way what it is like to live in a condominium - all these rules?

The insurance giant, Geico, famous for its satiric commercials has now given its perspective on condos and HOA's by making a commercial parody of HOA boards. In its commercial, Geico paints a despotic HOA chair-person named "Cynthia," who traverses the property measuring the height of shrubs, checking an owner's garbage and taking a chainsaw to his mailbox. When I saw the commercial, I thought it was hysterical. We all know a Cynthia or two and in my world when a giant like Geico makes fun of you, that demonstrates that you have made it into the collective consciousness of America - HOA's and condos are big enough to be made fun of in national TV spots. The commercial generated a great deal of buzz and criticism from condominium boards, managers and lawyers across the country, and CAI National issued a press release and invited Geico representatives to spend 15 minutes (as the commercial tag line is spend 15 minutes on car insurance) with them to learn more about HOA's. Personally, I think that is an overreaction.

Most people have understood the need for tough rules and restrictions in response to the pandemic as they are there to limit and slow the spread of the virus and prevent people from dying - Safety first. While Cynthia and some boards may go a little overboard on their rules and suffer the parody of the media, most condominium rules are designed to protect the safety, health and well-being of the condominium and its residents while others are designed to limit liability and risk.

But let's step back and put it all in perspective. Respect the rules and respect each other. Remember that we are a community, whether it's a condominium, a town, a state, country or the world. We are all people regardless of race, color or religion. We are all trying to get through this without the fabric of society completely collapsing around us. A society without any rules is anarchy. Now we just need to give Cynthia a little perspective.

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