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Samuel Shapiro & Co.

Marjorie Shapiro
President and CEO
www.shapiro.com

The US economy in 2011 is no more certain than it was in 2010. The transportation sector in the market is often cited by analysts as an indicator of future economic trends. At this time last year, the indicator of transport shipping was up roughly 8 percent. As of this writing, this same index is showing a decline of 5.2 percent. Whether this is a bad omen for 2012 is anyone's guess, but history has proven itself before.

The U.S. economy is stagnant and the uncertainty about the current economic situation is reflected in our industry. Steamship lines appear to be very tempted to resort to supply-and-demand games; but unlike 2010, the foundation does not seem to be present for a confident position.

In addition to the uncertain US and EU economic climates, there has been no progress about how to address the stalemate in our government. There remains speculation about future U.S. tax policy; consumers remain saddled with debt; and Congress bickers and focuses solely on budget-cutting (which could incite another recession) and their personal agendas, rather than developing an effective plan that addresses our core issues and waken our country.

Coupled with this, we have the upcoming elections (and associated shenanigans), the continued ramifications of the Arab Spring, and the talks of protectionism against the Chinese to consider.

Yet there are several positives to consider. The U.S. economy has proven to be resilient over the course of history; this challenging era will be no different. Consider how well we responded to the uncertainty of the past couple of years; we recognized the need to build greater efficiencies into our business models and we responded; this made many of us stronger. Appreciate as well that our "next generation" exudes an energy and determination that will propel us forward in the right direction.

With consumers and businesses wary, I suspect this is yet another year where we need to tighten our seatbelts in anticipation of an unpredictable ride.

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