

Writers Guild of America suddenly announces new contract with studios

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On April 4, 2026, in the midst of Easter and Passover, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) announced a tentative agreement on a new Minimum Basic Agreement (MBA), nearly a month before the May 1 contract expiration. The WGA Negotiating Committee declared that the deal “protects writers’ health plan,” “builds on gains from 2023,” and “addresses free work challenges,” recommending it for ratification by the membership.

The so-called “early resolution,” hailed in industry publications as a success for “labor peace,” is in fact a preemptive capitulation designed to head off a broader confrontation between writers and the studios at a moment of escalating social and economic crisis.

The WGA has also emphasized a “multimillion-dollar” infusion into its health plan, which has suffered losses exceeding \$120 million following the 2023 strike and industry contraction. But even taking this at face value, this is a temporary patch on a structurally underfunded system shaped by declining employment and rising costs.

The agreement’s reported AI provisions, including expanded “regulations” on the training of models on writers’ work, will fail to meaningfully protect jobs. The union’s reference to the “gains” of 2023 says more than it intends because that contract, pushed through in a sellout of an historic strike, has been followed by three years of huge layoffs across the entertainment industry.

The wage proposal is also reported as 5, 4, 3.5 and 3 percent over four years. This is totally inadequate to address soaring living costs, particularly in Los Angeles.

The most striking feature of the contract is its timing. By reaching a deal nearly a month before the contract’s

expiration, the union is trying to forestall strike action. This was done without even seeking a strike authorization vote from the membership.

Instead, the leadership has imposed a top-down process in which the agreement’s details are withheld until after approval by the WGA West Board and WGA East Council. Only then will members be allowed to vote, under conditions designed to limit discussion and suppress opposition. This secrecy is a calculated effort to prevent rank-and-file writers from organizing resistance to an agreement crafted in the interests of management.

Worst of all, the contract reportedly runs for four years, breaking from the traditional three-year cycle. This “de-synchronizes” the WGA contract from the SAG-AFTRA actors union, undermining the potential for coordinated industry-wide action and further isolating writers. Contract talks have been ongoing with SAG-AFTRA since late February.

The 2023 struggle mobilized tens of thousands of writers, along with SAG-AFTRA actors and performers, and won broad support across the working class, creating the objective possibility of a direct challenge to the domination of the entertainment industry by a handful of conglomerates. But the WGA leadership made no effort to unify writers with actors, directors, or crew members facing similar attacks.

The bureaucracy is terrified that the AI-spearheaded jobs bloodbath will trigger uncontrollable rank-and-file opposition which could disrupt its cozy relations with management and the pro-corporate Democratic Party. The different social world which the bureaucracy occupies is shown by the staggering compensation of its top leadership. Executive Director Ellen Stutzman earns approximately \$682,692 annually, while Assistant Executive Directors takes home between

\$399,000 and \$468,000.

The tentative agreement has been announced as the WGA itself is ruthlessly trying to crush a strike by its own staffers, who have been out since February 17. As of April 1, workers have been stripped of their employer-sponsored healthcare. “How can we demand fair treatment from the studios when our own organization treats its staff this way?” one writer asked in comments circulating among members.

Writers must demand full transparency, including the immediate release of contract details and adequate time for discussion, while opposing any attempt to rush ratification. The contract must be rejected, and screenwriters must turn out to the working class for support.

In Los Angeles, the capital of the entertainment industry, tens of thousands of educators and school workers are moving toward a strike on April 14. Within the entertainment industry, other sections of workers are also approaching decisive struggles. Contracts covering actors, directors and crew members are set to expire, raising the prospect of a broader wave of industrial action.

Above all, initiative must be taken by the rank and file. Rank-and-file committees, independent and democratically controlled by workers, must be built to organize a fight not only against the studios but the sellout bureaucracy. Such organizations can serve as the basis for uniting with other sections of workers, laying the foundation for a broader movement against corporate domination.



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