

# Reject the Writers Guild of America sellout contract!

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16 April 2026

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges members of the Writers Guild of America to reject the tentative agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers by the widest possible margin in voting from April 16 to April 24. This is not a “contract” but a slave charter, surrendering key positions without even the pretense of a fight.

The contract contains huge givebacks on healthcare, accepts sub-inflation pay increases and has no meaningful AI protections. The union did not even seek a strike authorization vote before springing the contract a full month before the expiration of the old one. It is dealing far more ruthlessly with the strike of its own staffers than with management: cutting off healthcare and taking punitive measures against them.

Not only the current struggle, but future ones are at stake. The four-year deal moves WGA workers off the schedule of SAG-AFTRA, who are also currently in contact talks. This splits the industry and allows management to divide and conquer.

An April 11 Zoom meeting, attended by about 11,000 members, was marked by intense outrage, with many writers openly challenging leadership and exposing a widening gap between the rank and file and the officials who claim to represent them. The reaction to the deal was “sticker shock,” as multiple writers told The Ankler website.

A growing “Vote No” movement has formed among rank-and-file writers. They reject claims that there is no alternative, considering unprecedented levels of wealth.

But this opposition must be organized. Writers and other workers in the entertainment industry must be organized, with a particular appeal to SAG-AFTRA members, and support must be built across the entire working population. Rank-and-file committees must be organized to build a movement from below, freeing writers from the straitjacket of the WGA bureaucracy and taking the initiative to build a broader movement.

## Massive givebacks on healthcare

The Writers Guild leadership presents the four-year deal as

necessary to stabilize a health plan it says is close to insolvency. The deal would add \$321 million to the plan, but \$41 million of this is obtained by cutting benefits and shifting money from other union funds, including parental leave.

For decades, the “Guild Shop” model provided a basic level of security in a highly unstable freelance industry, with employer-funded benefits helping offset irregular work. The new agreement breaks with this model. Writers who previously had fully covered healthcare will now face higher premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs.

For a family of four, these changes mean thousands of dollars in new annual expenses. This is effectively a cut in real income, especially for lower-paid writers already struggling with high living costs in cities like Los Angeles and New York.

The standardization of out-of-network reimbursement at 150 percent of Medicare rates limits what the plan will pay non-network providers. This increases the likelihood that doctors will bill writers for the remaining costs, shifting more financial risk directly onto individuals.

Union officials argue these cuts are unavoidable, citing a reported \$122 million loss after the 2023 strike and a projected insolvency within three years.

But the funding shortfall is dwarfed by the \$250 billion spent last year alone on mergers and acquisitions in the global entertainment industry. Why should writers be made to pay for it?

## Sub-inflation wages, no meaningful AI protections

Under the deal, writers receive a 1.5 percent raise in the first year, followed by 3 percent annual increases, provocative numbers that fail to keep pace with inflation.

The 2026 agreement does not stop the use of AI to slash jobs. It allows studios to use writers’ work for training through union-approved deals, without giving individual writers the right to refuse. AI can still be used in early stages such as outlines and concepts, letting studios reduce the role of writers and lower pay.

Loopholes around “source material” remain: The 2026 deal allows studios to work around it indirectly, especially through early-stage AI use and ownership control. Disclosure rules are weak, making it difficult to verify how AI is used. At the same time, any financial gains from licensing may not go directly to writers. In practice, the deal regulates AI use while leaving the main threats to jobs, pay and creative control intact.

The agreement does include limited improvements, such as minimum standards for “page-one” rewrites and expanded eligibility for guaranteed second steps. But enforcement is weak, and the long-standing practice of unpaid “shadow rewrites” remains largely untouched.

## **Hundreds of billions spent on mergers and acquisitions**

These tensions are unfolding alongside major industry consolidation. The proposed merger between Paramount Skydance and Warner Bros. Discovery creates a media giant with unprecedented control over film and television production. This reduces the number of buyers for scripts, weakens writers’ bargaining power and allows studios to impose lower rates and stricter terms.

Streaming platforms further reinforce this shift. Viewership data is tightly controlled, reducing transparency and weakening residual payments. At the same time, short-term contracts, “mini-rooms” and other forms of contingent work are becoming more common, deepening the “gig-ification” of writing work.

An increase in the bonus for top-performing streaming shows will still leave the bonus itself unattainable for all but a handful. Only 26 titles on Netflix and five on Amazon Prime meet the threshold, which is viewership equal to 20 percent of the platform’s total subscribers.

## **The way forward**

The defense of democratic and social rights is bound up with the defense of culture. Corporate America is carrying out a massive vandalism operation, laying off tens of thousands of cultural workers and millions across all industries. AI is being used not only to eliminate writers and actors, but to undermine genuine independent artistic expression.

In its place, the corporations hope to have made-to-order, homogeneous, machine-produced content aimed at the highest possible margins and the lowest common denominator. A related goal is to deaden the public’s senses, as a way to deal with a growing mass movement as it develops against

dictatorship and inequality. Media consolidation is cementing a framework where a handful of huge corporations, integrated with the state, are working to censor critical voices.

The union bureaucracy everywhere is doing its best to disrupt this movement in order to avoid disrupting its connections with management and the political establishment. This latest sellout follows the cancellation of the strike in Los Angeles of 70,000 teachers and school workers, as well as the struggles of New York City nurses, Kaiser Permanente nurses, San Francisco educators and others.

The lessons of the 2023 strike must be drawn. Contract talks were conducted behind closed doors, and the strike was shut down before workers had the chance to vote on the tentative agreement. The deal was then presented as a “victory,” even as conditions have only worsened since then.

Above all, opposition must find new channels under the control of workers themselves. The rejection of this agreement must be followed by the independent mobilization of rank-and-file writers outside the union bureaucracy.

The fight against this agreement is inseparable from the broader struggle of the working class against austerity, censorship and authoritarianism. Writers are not alone! Teachers, nurses, logistics workers and others are confronting the same attacks and the same apparatus of suppression. A unified movement, built from below and across industries, can break this stranglehold and open the way for a genuine defense of jobs, living standards and artistic freedom.

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<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2026/04/06/uqox-a06.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2026/04/15/ivff-a15.html>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2026/03/28/lddo-m28.html>

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