

Writers Guild of America, East
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New York, NY 10019



Writers Guild of America, west
7000 West Third Street
Los Angeles, CA 90048

October 31, 2005

Dear Fellow Members,

We are pleased and proud to report that WGAw and WGAE have reached a tentative settlement that will end the ongoing dispute between our two unions. During our election campaigns we both promised the members of our unions that we would work tirelessly to find a fair resolution to this matter. With the dedication of our respective Board and Council we have managed to do just that.

Since our elections we have been in constant contact. After several positive discussions we agreed to hold two days of talks in the neutral city of San Francisco. We also agreed that the participants in the talks would be four writers from each union. Those talks took place on October 22nd & 23rd. The discussions went late into the night both days and they were incredibly productive.

During the talks we were reminded of all the common goals shared by writers. It was soon clear that our shared objectives outweighed our differences. Still, real differences remained. Left untouched we agreed that those struggles would continue to dominate our relationship as they have for far too long. As a result, both sides insisted that we resolve all of these disagreements as part of our settlement.

Some of the discussions were extremely difficult because, on certain issues, our unions have taken firm, incompatible positions that date back decades. Tough compromises needed to be made and indeed they were – by both sides.

In the end, we reached a tentative agreement that was unanimously passed by both the WGAw's Board and the WGAE's Council. A formal document reflecting the settlement is still being drafted and a portion of the agreement requires a Constitutional amendment (which in turn requires member approval) so you will be hearing from us again soon with more details. In the meantime, we have attached a summary for your review.

This is an exciting time for both of our Guilds because we have an historic opportunity to put decades of conflict behind us. You asked us to work together to focus on improving conditions for writers and we heard you. This settlement leaves both of our unions strong and healthy. Finally we can show management what two such unions can do when they join together and fight with one voice. We are all in this together.

Sincerely,

Patric M. Verrone
WGAw President

Chris Albers
WGAE President

WGAE/WGAw SETTLEMENT SUMMARY

- Both unions have stated that their number one priority is organizing new jobs for writers. We agreed that we will work together to develop a national organizing strategy and that we will carry out those efforts as a team. When possible we will also coordinate with other unions to gain additional muscle. Together we will organize writers in reality TV, animation, news, basic cable, nonfiction, games and the Internet.
- From now on, any issue that the two unions cannot agree upon will be subject to expedited arbitration. To put it simply, if we have a conflict in the future and we have trouble reaching a compromise, an arbitrator will decide the issue for us promptly. This will keep future disagreements from becoming drawn out conflicts.
- Some grievances and arbitrations involve members of both unions. We agreed that when it comes to those cases we could do a better job of sharing the work and costs. We created a system to ensure this work will be properly shared in the future.
- After dividing the work fairly, it was clear that the west still needed to be compensated for additional services they provide east members. WGAE has agreed to provide annual payments to WGAw to cover this additional work. The first year this payment is estimated to be close to \$500,000.
- Some of the work our two unions do for our respective members requires information from the other union. In the past this flow of information often dried up and was used as a weapon. This is unacceptable since each union must be able to properly serve their members. To make sure this never happens again we agreed to share all information regarding credits, waiver requests, residuals, contracts, grievances, and arbitrations that jointly affect both unions.
- The west's Board and the east's Council are supposed to hold joint meetings twice a year. The National Council (made up of members from both unions) is also supposed to meet twice a year. In recent years these meetings were not happening. To make sure these meetings get back on track we have set firm dates and locations. Also, National Council meetings will now be made up of five members from each union (3 officers and 2 Board/Council members).
- We need to do a better job of communicating with each other on all levels and our joint committees are no exception. We agreed to make sure that joint meetings are scheduled at times that work for both east and west members. Many committees, such as Awards and Organizing, will have a 50/50 makeup but no joint committees will have less than 1/3 representation by either union. New joint committees will be set up for daytime writers and news writers so they can coordinate strategies on a national level. Joint credits committees will now have eight west members and four east members. All negotiating committees will have proportional representation to reflect the percentage of each union's members who are eligible to vote on the contract being negotiated.
- Currently the two Guilds have different rules regarding who is eligible to vote. This is unfair when we are voting on issues that affect both unions. In order to alleviate that problem we have agreed to develop common voting standards for joint issues.

- We had a lot of problems to solve regarding jurisdiction. These discussions were given a great deal of time because they determine which union members will call home. During the past nine months there have been many differing points of view regarding east/west boundary lines and we considered them all. In the end, we agreed that the fairest system was to have clear cut boundary lines that specifically define each union's jurisdiction. We decided it is unfair for a member to send their dues to one union if they are really living in the other union's jurisdiction. A small percentage of members will be required to switch unions to reflect the area where they spend the majority of their time. We will jointly oversee these automatic transfers and we will make the process as quick and painless for our members as possible. In the future, membership will be determined as follows:
 - Domestic: If you live west of the Mississippi River you are a member of the west, period. If you live east of the Mississippi, you are a member of the east, period (that includes US territories). For those members who spend time in both jurisdictions, membership will be based upon where a writer spends the majority of their time over the previous two-year calendar period.
 - Foreign: Splitting the world in half by extending the Mississippi was fair geographically, but not monetarily. If we had done a geographic split WGAw would have ended up with a much smaller percentage of international writers. As a result, foreign membership will be based on the following: All writers living in the United Kingdom (and its dependent territories), Ireland, and Eastern Canada (east of Manitoba) will be members of WGAE. All writers living in Western Canada and the rest of the world will be members of WGAw.
- Years ago we had a joint membership directory that allowed writers to list their contact information. We agreed to launch a joint directory online that will make writers easier to find when employment opportunities arise. Each member will determine the specific information provided on their behalf.
- To avoid confusion, we agreed that neither union will represent themselves solely as "WGA," "The Writers Guild" or "The Writers Guild of America" unless both unions have given consent. Without that consent, both unions will refer to themselves by the full name (or full initials) of their union.
- We agreed to encourage members who are visiting or temporarily working in the other Guild's jurisdiction to take part in that Guild's meetings, events, and activities.