



Vol. XLVIII, No. 4
JUL-AUG 2023

Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO



Writers Guild of America 2023 Strike

The 2023 Writers Guild strike is so big that it has its own Wikipedia page. On that page, the strike is characterized as the “largest interruption to American television and film production since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as well as the largest labor stoppage the WGA has performed since the 2007-08 strike,” the site notes.

The strike began on May 2 when the WGA, which represents approximately 11,500 members who write the Hollywood shows and movies we watch, and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) failed to reach an agreement. Since then, the WGA members have walked picket lines at studios across the Country.

A strike like this has major economic implications. The 2007-08 strike lasted 100 days and cost \$2.1 billion to California’s economy alone.

WRITERS AREN'T RICH AND STREAMING AND AI WILL KEEP IT THAT WAY

Alex O’Keefe is a writer for what has been hailed as one of the best shows on TV: FX’s *The Bear*. But when the show won the WGA Award for Comedy Series, O’Keefe had a negative amount in his bank account and had to buy his tuxedo on credit. The small apartment he lives in in Brooklyn doesn’t have heat, and he says that he couldn’t run space heaters without blowing a fuse.

O’Keefe is a WGA member and is currently on strike for better wages and benefits, “and the only future I’m seeking financially is to enter that middle class, which has always been rarified for someone who comes from poverty... I thought we would be treated more like collaborators on a product. It’s like an assembly line now.”

In March, the WGA released a report, “Writers Are Not Keeping Up” that chronicles how companies have used the transition to streaming to cut writer pay and separate writing from production, worsening working conditions for series writers at all levels.

According to the report, “on TV staffs, more writers are working a minimum regardless of experience, often for fewer weeks, or in mini-rooms, while showrunners are left without a writing staff to complete the season.”

The report goes on to say that screenwriter compensation has “also stagnated over the past four years. Their pay is often stretched out over many months and can be held hostage by producers’ demands for free work. Particularly for screenwriters working at or near the Minimum Basic Agreement (MBA) minimum.”

SEE ‘WGA,’ PAGE 5

BACK TO SCHOOL



LOOK FOR THESE UNION-MADE PRODUCTS FROM THE UNITED STEEL WORKERS AND THE PRINTING, PUBLISHING, AND MEDIA WORKERS CWA. DON'T FORGET TO THANK YOUR UNIONIZED SCHOOL STAFF, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND BUS DRIVERS FOR ALL THEY DO.

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- » plast'r Craft modeling material
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Residents, Fellows at Mass General Brigham Vote to Unionize

In a vote of 1,215 to 412, medical residents and fellows at Mass General Brigham hospitals voted to join the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR), at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Union organizers say they hope to achieve better pay to accommodate the region's high cost of living and financial support for childcare. Other priorities include lower health insurance costs, compensation for supplies physicians use for work, and financial support for patients.

The win creates one of the largest unions of its kind in the country.

In a statement to the Boston Globe, Dr. Kayty Himmelstein, a member of the organizing committee said, "I'm excited to celebrate and to get to work negotiating our new contract. It [the vote] sends a pretty resounding message."

Residents and fellows often work 80-hours per week, and some say the pressures have escalated in recent years.

During the organizing drive, the health system announced it would provide 10 percent raises and \$10,000 stipends to resident and fellows to accommodate the rising cost of living. The system said the increase was part of larger salary adjustments it began last year, but organizers credited the union effort.

The vote follows a national trend as CIR-SEIU membership has almost doubled since early 2021 from 17,000 to 30,000 today. The union currently includes residents at Stanford Health Care, the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, Montefiore Medical Center in New York, and Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

In Massachusetts, Boston Medical Center and Cambridge Health Alliance have been unionized for several years. Residents and fellows at UMass Medical School unionized in 2021. The negotiated their first contract last summer.

At Mass General, doctors in the post-medical school training period, which includes an initial residency that lasts between three and seven years, depending on specialty, will be covered under the union contract. As well, those completing a fellowship — post residency — would be covered.

According to the union, the organizing drive began more than two years ago and has faced intense pushback from hospital management. The union says that management covered the walls with posters enumerating the reasons to vote no and circulated videos and text messages with similar messages.

During the grassroots effort to unionize, organizers say they got their information out largely through word of mouth. The organizers coordinated coverage for colleagues as they took time out of their shifts to vote, and staff showed up at the polls despite the demands of the job. Some came in from parental leave; others showed up at 5:30 in the morning before operating room cases began.

Himmelstein said, "it is an effort that reflects how much we care about this and how essential it is for our own wellbeing and patients."

And for Himmelstein, it is personal. She has one more year left in her fellowship, is nine months pregnant and has seen firsthand how difficult it is juggling doctor's appointments and managing the cost of future childcare.

Talking about her circumstances, Himmelstein told the Boston Globe, "That added urgency for me, personally, to say, 'we need a mechanism to advocate for ourselves to take care of ourselves and our families [so we can] focus on our patients while we're at work.'"

UNITE HERE!

Union Says Moon Rabbit Closure Meant to Disrupt Union Drive

Moon Rabbit, an acclaimed Vietnamese restaurant helmed by Chef Kevin Tien, unexpectedly closed its location on the Wharf in Washington, DC, in May. Local union officials say the move was engineered by the owners of the luxury hotel that houses the restaurant to kill unionizing the hospitality workers there.

IHG Hotels and Resorts, the developers of the multi-billion hotel project are "desperate to keep the union out of their hotel and did whatever that took, even if it meant parting ways with a star chef, even if it meant disrupting the livelihoods of dozens of workers and their families," Paul Schwalb, executive secretary and treasurer of Unite Here Local 25 told the Washington Post. Members of the union protested the move, which happened just three weeks after the union filed union election paperwork for food and beverage workers at the hotel. Those hotel employees would have staffed the restaurant.

In a surprising turn, the union announced just weeks after the closure, that the Wharf InterContinental Hotel group voluntarily agreed to recognize its employees' union after cards are checked—which will include workers from the now-shuttered Moon Rabbit restaurant.

"Every tactic that they used to try and break support only led to more people joining in the movement," said Wes Waterhouse, a former Moon Rabbit bartender and server.

Waterhouse said he believes that the sudden closure created more support for the union drive, adding that hotel workers who had not previously signed a union card did so after the closure.

"When hospitality workers stand up for their rights and organize together, we win," said Schwalb.



What's Disgusting? Union Busting

From Starbucks and Amazon to GOP Governor Ron DeSantis, union busting has reached new heights.

In Florida, DeSantis has gone after public service employees, signing legislation that prevents dues from being deducted from workers' pay checks in an effort to quash public service unions.

Members will be required to pay their dues directly rather than having them auto deducted from their pay checks. A move DeSantis and his ilk hope will reduce the number of dues paying union members. The legislation, SB 256, also requires labor unions to determine and report how many eligible employees are dues paying union members, and if that number is fewer than 60 percent of eligible employees, unions will have to be recertified as the collective bargaining agents. As well, the bill allows public service employers to challenge union applications to renew registrations as bargaining agents if the employers think the applications are inaccurate.

AFSCME members, teachers' unions and other public employee unions in Florida say they are determined to push back against efforts by DeSantis and his anti-worker allies in the legislature.

"Freedom has always been earned from the bottom up," AFSCME Florida President and AFSCME International Vice President Vicki Hall said in a statement. "That is why we believe the collective voice of workers will overcome SB 256's goal of silencing Florida's dedicated public workers by stripping them of their freedom to speak up collectively and their right to join a union."

STARBUCK STALLS BY REFUSING TO BARGAIN VIA ZOOM

At Starbucks, the company has failed to negotiate with the union representing some 300 of the 9,000 corporate owned stores. The company has continuously walked out of bargaining sessions when union representatives have joined via zoom rather than in person.

The company is insisting that all bargaining happen in person and has refused to let employees participate virtually.

Company management claim it has the right to demand in-person sessions.

The union, Starbucks Workers United, believes this is yet another stall tactic. In March, Kayla Blado, a spokesperson for the National Labor

Relations Board said the company's refusal to sit at the bargaining table with workers joining remotely is a violation of labor law.

To date, Starbucks has had the most NLRB cases of any private employer. The number of cases is 30 percent more than its closest peer UPS, which has twice the number of employees of Starbucks.

The Senate HELP Committee issued a report that says Starbucks "broke the law 130 times across six states since workers began organizing in fall 2021, including firing or forcing out 12 pro-union workers and firing another two because they cooperated with NLRB investigations."

The report, which was issued prior to Starbucks former CEO Howard Schultz's testimony to the committee in late March, documented a series of misleading claims made by Starbucks to "set the record straight and to encourage the company to negotiate a fair first contract with union workers as required by law."

NLRB ACCUSES AMAZON OF ILLEGALLY FIRING PRO-UNION WORKERS

Amazon has a slew of federal labor board allegations that it illegally refused to bargain with the union representing workers at a New York City warehouse, fired a union leader, restricted union access to its facilities, and committed other unfair labor practices.

March 31 marked one year since the Staten Island warehouse employees voted to join the Amazon Labor Union. Since then, the fight has been an uphill battle. Immediately after the election, the company filed more than two dozen formal objections to the results, which tied the union up in hearings well into last summer. The company has continued to use delay tactics and the courts to stifle the progress of



negotiating.

The NLRB has even accused Amazon CEO Andy Jassy of illegally coercing and intimidating workers by telling them they would be "less empowered" if they unionized.

Of course, Amazon denies all allegations of union busting.

EMPLOYERS USE STALL TACTICS TO BUST UNIONS

According to a 2008 study from Desautels Professor John-Paul Ferguson, union election victories resulted in first contracts only 56.3 percent of the time. Ferguson says, "it is even harder now. Employers are treating union's success in a NLRB election as just another setback."

In a 2022 HELP committee hearing, Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) cited data from Bloomberg Law's labor database that showed the time it takes to negotiate a first contract has increased from an average of 409 days to now an average of 465 days—more than a year.

Many in the labor community believe the reason for the long delays is obvious. "A lack of progress in bargaining can dissuade workers from unionizing, by conveying the sense that it's futile even when you win the recognition election," says Terri Gerstein, Senior Fellow at the Economic Policy Institute.

Another reason union negotiators believe companies stall negotiations is that, under U.S. labor law, a union cannot be decertified until after a year. If during that first year, no progress is made on negotiating a contract, the union members may become dissatisfied with union and vote to decertify. This tactic works because union members see no benefit to unionization when they don't have a contract in place.

'WGA,' FROM PAGE 1

WGA says that half of series writers now work on streaming projects that are short orders, separate writing and production, lack a season calendar, and have depressed writer pay.

As the chart from the WGA report shows, at every job title, more writers

work at MBA minimum now than a decade ago. In the 2013-14 season, 33 percent of all TV series writers were paid minimum; now half are working at minimum. Increasing numbers of seasoned writers, including showrunners, are paid no over-scale premium for their years of experience.

In addition to falling weekly pay, WGA says that most writers on streaming shows are earning less per season because of shorter work periods. In the following chart produced by WGA, the new "typical" employment for lower-and mid-level writers on a streaming series is 20-24 weeks, or only 14 weeks if the room is convened without a series order. Showrunners, on the other hand, are working almost the same number of weeks in streaming as they do in broadcast, reflecting the true length of time these series take to complete.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also of concern for Hollywood writers. "I hope I'm wrong, but I do think that the use of AI is going to take over the entertainment industry," said Justine Bateman, a member of the writers, directors, and actors' guilds. "And I think it's going to be really bad."

Generative AI would drastically change the entertainment industry. Advocates for the new technology see it as an opportunity break down barriers to entry into the profession.

"It's going to be very soon until we can literally just type in a prompt and see something as a consumer," said AI filmmaker Caleb Ward. "And you don't have to have any sort of skills as a visual effects artist or as someone in the entertainment industry."

But writers like Bateman say that the technology would cost jobs. "The way AI works for someone who doesn't know or generative AI, I'll simplify it, it's like a box. It's say you want it to write books, you feed it a bunch of books, and then you give it a task, write me a book about pandas and outer space, and it'll spit out that book," Bateman told USA Today. "So you can imagine for screenwriters, you feed it all these scripts that all these screenwriters have written, and then you give it a task, give me a script about pandas and outer space and it'll spit it out."

The WGA in its negotiations is demanding that regulatory standards be set around the new technology to ensure fair labor conditions and compensation for Hollywood professionals.

MEDIAN WEEKS WORKED, 2021-22

Job Title	Streaming	Network & CW
Staff Writer	20	29
Story Editor	20	35
Executive Story Editor	20	40
Co-Producer	22	38
Producer	24	38.5
Supervising Producer	24	40
Co-Executive Producer	24	38
Consulting Producer	13	35
Executive Producer	24	42
Showrunner	44	42.5

WRITERS WORKING AT MBA MINIMUM

Job Title	2013-14	2021-22	% Pt. Change
Staff Writer	86%	98%	+12
Story Editor	81%	95%	+14
Executive Story Editor	43%	58%	+15
Co-Producer	10%	59%	+49
Producer	2%	31%	+29
Supervising Producer	9%	27%	+18
Consulting Producer	6%	34%	+28
Co-Executive Producer	3%	14%	+11
Executive Producer	2%	19%	+17
Showrunner	2%	24%	+22
All Writers	33%	49%	+16

Master Lock to Close Last U.S. Plant

With record revenues reported in 2022, workers were surprised when the more than 100-year-old Master Lock announced it would close its last remaining U.S. plant, located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



The more than 400 employees, including 330 workers represented by United Auto Workers Local 469 were told that the phased shutdown will begin in October 2023, with final operations halting by March 2024. The jobs will be sent abroad to Mexico and China, where Master Lock has manufacturing plants.

“This must have been in the works for several years at a minimum because you cannot pick up the operation we have, where we make literally millions of parts a day, and just plop it somewhere else without a lot of work,” former UAW Local 469 President Mike Bink told *The Guardian*. “We’re in the poorest area of Milwaukee, the vast majority of our people running that equipment are from Milwaukee. There aren’t a lot of jobs that they can go to that will come close to replacing that income and benefit level and we’re dealing with a corporation where that is just not a consideration.”

The unionized workforce and local elected officials have criticized the company. UAW Region 4 director Brandon Campbell said the union is “disgusted, yet again, as another profitable corporation has decided to close the doors of a manufacturing icon in corporate America’s neverending quest for profit, without any regard for the people amassing their wealth.”

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson said he is “enormously disappointed by the impending closure of the Master Lock facility. It is a slap in the face to the hard-working Milwaukee employees.”

Master Lock was founded in 1921. Its employees have been unionized since 1939. In the mid-1980s, the company employed about 1,300 workers in Milwaukee. By the 1990s, the company began outsourcing production to China and Mexico. In 2021, the company cut 61 jobs at the Milwaukee facility.

“This must have been in the works for several years at a minimum because you cannot pick up the operation we have, where we make literally millions of parts a day, and just plop it somewhere else without a lot of work.”

— Mike Bink, former UAW Local 469 President

AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS SEP-OCT ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶



HOTELS

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Please support the workers in these hotels by continuing to boycott the following properties:

ALASKA:

- Hilton Anchorage
- Marriott Anchorage Downtown
- Homewood Suites by Hilton Anchorage
- Hampton Inn Anchorage
- Hilton Garden Inn

CALIFORNIA:

- Hilton Long Beach
- Hyatt Regency Sacramento
- Hyatt Centric Fisherman's Wharf
- La Meridien
- Hilton Los Angeles Airport
- Terranea Resort
- Hyatt Regency Santa Clara
- Hyatt Regency Sacramento
- Four Seasons Beverly Hills

- Hotel Bel Air
- Langham Huntington

MARYLAND:

- Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel

WASHINGTON, DC:

- Hotel Zena

MASSACHUSETTS:

- Boston Marriott Copley Place

OTHER

SUBMITTED BY Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

- Reynolds American, Inc., Vuse e-cigarettes

FOOD

SUBMITTED BY Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

- Mondelez International Snack Foods (those made in Mexico)

LEGAL

SUBMITTED BY American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

- Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea
- McDonald, Lamond, Canzoneri and Hickernell

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.

POLICY GUIDELINE FOR ENDORSEMENT OF AFFILIATES' BOYCOTTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has developed policy guidelines that regulate how the federation endorses boycotts undertaken by its affiliates. To get AFL-CIO sanction, boycotts should be directed at primary employers.

THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE THESE PROVISIONS:

- All requests to the national AFL-CIO for endorsement must be made by a national or international union.
 - Any affiliated union with a contract in force with the same primary employer will be contacted by the AFL-CIO to determine whether there is an objection to the federation's endorsement.
 - Affiliates will be asked to provide the AFL-CIO with background information on the dispute in a confidential information survey. Prior to endorsement of the boycott, the executive officers, or their designees, will meet with the national union's officers, or their designees, to discuss the union's strategic plan and timetable for the boycott, or other appropriate tactics, and to discuss the federation's role.
 - The national or international union initiating the boycott is primarily responsible for all boycott activities; the AFL-CIO will provide supplemental support.
 - Boycotts will be carried on the AFL-CIO national boycott list for a period of one year, and the endorsement will expire automatically at the end of that time. National and international unions may request one-year extensions of the listings for actions where an organizing or bargaining campaign is actively in place. ■
- (These guidelines were adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in April 2011.)

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EndNotes



Label Letter

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Vol. XLVIII, No. 4 • ISSN 0161-9365



Label Letter is published bimonthly by the Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO. Subscriptions to members only. USPS #424-530. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. Postmaster: Send corrections of address to Room 209, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: 202-508-3700.

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By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

Union Busting 2023 Update



Union busting continues unabated in the face of governmental penalties that are too lenient.

Companies that fight their employees and violate their right to organize use the old tactics of mandatory captive meetings, one-on-one management contacts with employees, illegal firing of union activists, hiring of union busting specialists and a continuous stream of anti-union propaganda.

The deliberate delays in bargaining to discourage workers seeking a first contract goes on. Companies still hope to get a decertification vote after a year of fruitless negotiations and delays that they cause.

Now, in 2023, some companies are pioneering new anti-union approaches. For example, Amazon uses technology to track every movement of its employees in a warehouse. It can see when its workers come close enough to share information. It has surveillance in parking lots. It examines employees'

social media posts to find union supporters.

Amazon's tactics are meant to deter contacts between employees. To create a sense of pervasive oversight with an attendant fear of retaliation

Starbucks has demonstrated another kind of creative anti-unionism. It offers better benefits to its non-union shops. Its billionaire top executive visits coffee shop locations to convince or pressure employees to remain non-union.

Unfortunately, all of these activities are known to the business community. Media coverage of union organizing campaigns and the corporate reaction to them provides instruction in anti-unionism.

Strong legislative protection for union organizing is imperative. Getting that legislation won't be easy.

Labor Law Reform: too little was done when our allies held the White House and the Congress. In 2024, a firm commitment to get reform passed should be required of every political candidate.