



# BULLETIN

## NABET-CWA/ABC-Disney NEGOTIATIONS New York City



March 4, 2022

### **ABC Master Agreement Negotiations - Bulletin #13**

The parties met for negotiations this week via Zoom, with the Union committee members meeting together in New York City at the offices of NABET-CWA Locals 11 and 16. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were again unable to meet in person with Company representatives. The sessions concluded on Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. Bargaining is scheduled to resume on Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, for two weeks, with the Master Agreement set to expire on March 31, 2022. Bargaining sessions are tentatively scheduled for face-to-face meetings in ABC's New York offices.

Among the topics of this week's discussion were:

**Wages** – The parties have not yet gone past their initial wage proposals as there are still so many other issues on the bargaining table. The Union proposed 3% for the 6-month contract extension from April 1, 2021-September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021; and 5% per year going forward for raises. ABC has proposed no money for the extension, and only 2% per year going forward. It is not uncommon to still have wages unresolved late in bargaining, but the volume of other issues remaining open is concerning.

**Daily Hire to Staff Conversions** – The Company has returned with a counter offer of staff hires which no longer includes the multi-tiered system that had originally been proposed. The number of offers remains low, but negotiation continues over the details of the proposal.

**PILOB (Payment in Lieu of Benefits) & 401(k) Contribution Increases** – The Union and the Company continue to trade proposals on PILOBs and 401(k) contributions for daily hires. The Company wants to continue the existing multi-tiered system for different shows and platforms, while the Union is proposing to unify the various PILOBs and increase the yearly 401(k) contribution to improve Daily Hires' retirement security. The issues are not yet resolved, but remain important to the Union's Committee.

**Daily Hire Travel-Only Days** – The Union continues to seek compensation on travel-only days to be paid as workdays (rather than the \$270 stipend) with a proposal for the straight-time on these days paid at \$37 per hour and overtime at \$55.50 per hour. Under this proposal, our members would also receive a PILOB for these days, and the hours would count as time worked for purposes of overtime and benefit payments. The Company has so far balked at this proposal, claiming the PILOB alone would cost them \$1.4 million a year. For reference, now former Disney CEO Bob Iger received \$46 million in compensation from the Company last year.

**Newswriters and KGO Engineers** – Since 1997, ABC has restricted the wages of A Unit Engineers at KGO in San Francisco – both staff and daily hires are constrained to a wage scale that is 12-14% less than the Master Agreement rates for A Unit Engineers around the country. Since the 2017-2021 Master Agreement went into effect, Newswriters in Chicago (K Unit), San Francisco (F Unit), and Los Angeles (O Unit) who were not already at the top wage scale have been prohibited from automatically advancing to that top scale. The Union proposal to end these provisions which treat these workers as lesser than their fellow NABET-represented ABC employees was met with an emphatic “NO” from Company spokesperson Sean Quinn. He insisted that the engineering wage suppression cannot and would not be lifted. “We are not going to re-litigate an argument from 23 years ago.” He also maintained that after “only” 5-years, the restrictions on Newswriters are still too fresh to be renegotiated. When asked, he was unable to provide us with what the appropriate window for negotiation would be between those extremes.

**Child Bonding Leave** – ABC/Disney now offers 8 weeks of paid Child Bonding Leave to staff employees upon the arrival of a new child, followed by the option of 4 additional weeks of unpaid time off. While the Company has been willing to extend this benefit to NABET-represented staff employees (a few hundred people nationwide), they are unwilling to offer any paid child bonding time for daily hires who welcome new children to their families. We have tried repeatedly to get this highly-requested benefit for daily hires who work “Full-Time Equivalent” (“FTE”) days. But faced with the rejection of expansion of this benefit to “FTE” daily hires, we asked for ANY level of the benefit which the Company would be willing to offer. They refuse to extend ANY CHILD BONDING benefit to ANY daily hire.

**Sideletter DV** – The parties reached a tentative agreement to limit the expanded ability the Company had been seeking to allow non-represented people to operate the intercom system. This was of great concern to our members working in Audio, but the new language would allow non-NABET configuration for software updates and network security issues only. This matter was handled by a subcommittee and is now resolved with commitment to notify the NABET-represented Audio Engineer of any changes.

**Juneteenth Holiday** – The Union has been pushing to have Juneteenth National Independence Day added as a new holiday for both staff and daily hires. The Company’s response continues to be that they will add Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and ONLY MLK Day, to the staff holiday list. For daily hires, they are only willing to add Juneteenth, if the Union gives up the day after Thanksgiving. The day after Thanksgiving is an important holiday for our members since it is a Company holiday and many of our daily hires regularly work that day... but so far, all other proposed compromises to add Juneteenth to the list have been met with rejection.

The Union Committee will travel home this weekend, and then return to New York City to resume internal caucus sessions on Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. Negotiations are scheduled to resume in face-to-face sessions at ABC’s headquarters on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Some representatives may remain on Zoom, but this will be the first in-person bargaining since the 2<sup>nd</sup> round in November 2021.

The Master Agreement expires on March 31, 2022.