

WGA Sets Its Pattern Of Demands For Looming Contract Talks: Here They Are

By [Peter White](#)

Peter White

Television Editor

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WGA West building in Hollywood

The WGA has issued its Pattern of Demands ahead of its negotiations with the AMPTP.

It comes after the union has requested that members vote on these before talks begin on March 20 and its contract expires on May 1.

The demands have been split into three main categories: Compensation and Residuals, Pension Plan and Health Fund and Professional Standards and Protection in the Employment of Writers.

Most of the topics are expected including higher minimum rates, the issue of mini-rooms, increased residuals and increase contributions to its pension fund.

However, some of them are slightly unexpected to the wider industry including addressing the issue of AI, which has come to the fore with the rise of services such as ChatGPT, as well as applying minimums for late-night shows across streaming services.

Writers must vote by March 7.

Compensation and Residuals

- Increased minimum compensation significantly to address the devaluation of writing in all areas of television, new media and features
- Standardized compensation and residual terms for features whether released theatrically or on streaming
- Address the abuses of mini-rooms
- Ensure appropriate television series writing compensation throughout entire process of pre production, production and post production
- Expand span protections to cover all television writers
- Apply MBA minimums to comedy variety programs made for new media
- Increased residuals for under compensated reuse markets

- Restrict uncompensated use of excerpts

Pension Plan and Health Fund

- Increase contributions to pension plan and health fund

Professional Standards and Protection in the Employment of Writers

- For feature contracts in which compensation falls below a specified threshold, require weekly payment of compensation and a minimum of two steps
- Strengthen regulation of options and exclusivity in television writer employment contracts
- Regulate use of material produced using artificial intelligence or similar technologies
- Enact measures to combat discrimination and harassment and to promote pay equity
- Revise and expand all arbitrator lists

It is, in fact, very similar to the WGA's Pattern of Demands three years ago, which was also set out in the same three areas.

In 2020, the guild wanted to increase minimum compensation in all areas, expand made-for new media programs subject to MBA minimums, address issues for writing teams and inequities in compensation, enhance protections against uncompensated work and improve residuals for reuse markets.

WGA West President Meredith Stiehm, WGA East President Michael Winship and the entire Negotiating Committee are urging members to approve the Pattern of Demands, with the unanimous recommendation from the Negotiating Committee and the WGA West's Board and the WGA East's Council.

“As we prepare to negotiate a new MBA, your approval of a Pattern of Demands is a constitutionally-required step in the bargaining process,” they wrote in a letter to members who are eligible to vote. “While the Pattern does not detail specific proposals that will be made during negotiations, it is designed to inform the memberships of our two Guilds of general objectives we will pursue.

“We are writing to ask for your support in the form of a yes vote in favor of the Pattern of Demands – the result of a continuing dialogue with our members

conducted over the past three years. This Pattern comes to you unanimously recommended by our Negotiating Committee, and by the governing bodies of both Guilds: the WGA West's Board of Directors and the WGA East's Council.

“The 2023 MBA negotiations takes place in the context of an expanding media industry that remains highly profitable, despite short-term declines in profitability affecting some companies. The broad goal of our negotiating committee will be to build on the gains achieved in past contracts, and to ensure that writers receive their fair share of the proceeds generated by the content they create.”