

Actors' Equity Association Statement on Asner v. Actors' Equity Litigation

Los Angeles, June 28, 2016- Actors' Equity Association and the plaintiffs in the Asner vs. Actors' Equity litigation announced today that they were unable to resolve their dispute. Due to previously agreed upon ground rules, both parties are unable to comment on the actual discussions.

Labor unions, including Actors' Equity Association (Equity), exist primarily to advocate for better wages and working conditions for their members. For more than a century, Equity has fought for the basic principle that its members deserve to be paid for their work and to be treated fairly. In an effort to ensure that a percentage of actors who appear onstage in 99-seat productions are paid a wage, the National Council of Equity conducted surveys and membership meetings over the course of several months. The Council conducted an advisory referendum and, after carefully considering the results, created opportunities that would allow for some members to work under contractual agreements and be paid at least minimum wage. The Council also created 3 internal union membership rules that provided members the opportunity to volunteer their time: a) self-producing, b) performing with membership companies, or c) appearing in 50-seat showcases. This was and remains an essential step forward for fair pay in LA County, which was out of sync with the rest of the nation prior to the new rules being adopted.

The 99-Seat Transitional Code, which was created to give theaters and producers time to make the transition to one of the contractual agreements or membership rules and was extended while the facilitated discussions with the plaintiffs were underway, will no longer be available, effective December 14, 2016.

While we are disappointed that this dispute will enter the courtroom, Equity intends to vigorously defend itself against the meritless lawsuit and will file an immediate motion to dismiss. We are fully prepared to defend both the process and the substance of Council's actions.

In October 2015, Equity issued the following statement: It is disappointing that this prolonged process has now resulted in what will surely be a very expensive litigation for Actors' Equity. Unfortunately, the real victims here are the members all over the country who understand that when a single community files costly lawsuits and buys full-page ads in major newspapers to insist that they should not be paid, it has an inevitable and deleterious effect on the union's bargaining power for the rest of its members.

Background:

Actors' Equity Association (Equity) is the labor union which represents more than 50,000 professional stage actors and stage managers nationwide. Equity negotiates wages, working and safety conditions, and provides a wide range of benefits including health, pension and 401k plans for its members.

Over the course of several months, Equity conducted surveys and membership meetings and after considering the results of the advisory referendum, the National Council, Equity's governing body, carved out even more exemptions to the original proposals. By doing so, the National Council created a system that would allow for some members to be paid minimum

wage for rehearsals and performances. In addition, those members who chose to would still be able to self-produce, appear in showcase productions in theaters with 50-seats or less or participate with membership companies under the new internal union membership rules.