

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL
STAGE EMPLOYEES *The Union Behind*
Entertainment IATSE.net

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IATSE Members Ratify Contracts with Producers, Studios and Streaming Services

Contracts between IATSE and AMPTP address quality-of-life issues such as rest and meal breaks; boost revenues from streaming; include raises for all members and lift those at the bottom to a living wage.

LOS ANGELES - Members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts (IATSE) have voted to ratify two contracts, the Basic Agreement, and the Area Standards Agreement, with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), the trade group representing producers, major studios and streaming services.

“From start to finish, from preparation to ratification, this has been a democratic process to win the very best contracts,” said IATSE International President Matthew Loeb. “The vigorous debate, high turnout, and close election, indicates we have an unprecedented movement-building opportunity to educate members on our collective bargaining process and drive more participation in our union long-term.”

IATSE uses an electoral college style system through which locals are assigned delegates based on their size of memberships. Members vote within their local union and once a local reaches a majority vote, to either ratify or reject, all delegate votes are assigned to the majority result.

In the end, the combined vote was 359 (56%) to 282 (44%), out of 641 total delegate votes from the 36 local unions eligible. For the Basic Agreement the vote was 256 voting yes to 188 no and for the Area Standards Agreement the yes vote was 103 to 94 no votes.

The popular vote was much closer. A combined 50.3% voted yes and 49.7% voted no for both contracts. For the Basic Agreement the popular vote came in at 49.6% yes to 50.4% no. On the Area Standards Agreement the popular vote stands at 52% yes to 48% no. For the Basic Agreement eight locals voted yes and five locals voted no. Among the Area Standards local unions, 14 locals voted yes and nine voted no.

Turnout was high. Seventy-two percent of the 63,209 members eligible to vote cast ballots. Bargaining teams for all 36 local unions involved had endorsed passage and both agreements passed.

“Our goal was to achieve fair contracts that work for IATSE members in television and film—that address quality-of-life issues and conditions on the job like rest and meal breaks,” said Loeb. “We met our objectives for this round of bargaining and built a strong foundation for future agreements.”

Both three-year contracts contain provisions that guarantee adequate rest at the end of the workday and on the weekend for those employed on film and television productions along with meal breaks during the workday and stiff financial penalties if the break periods are violated.

In addition to across-the-board wage increases, the new agreements dramatically lift those at the bottom of the pay scale from poverty to a living wage. New provisions also will significantly improve wages and working conditions for IATSE members employed on streaming productions.

The international union worked closely with its locals to establish a set of objectives for negotiations. Discussions in local unions early in the year helped the bargaining teams set clear goals including new measures related to diversity and inclusion.

The dynamics of these contract negotiations were unprecedented, taking place during a global pandemic, via a remote-meeting platform, after an industry shutdown, and at a time when production for television and film was surging. Also, for the first time, the Basic Agreement, covering more than 40,000 members in 13 West Coast local unions, and the Area Standards Agreement, covering more than 20,000 members in 23 IATSE local unions elsewhere in the country, expired at the same time.

Negotiations for both the Basic Agreement and Area Standards Agreement began in May but broke off in September. Going into the fall, negotiators for both the union and AMPTP were far apart. The producers refused to even discuss some of the union's demands. The union responded by holding a strike authorization vote at the beginning of October. Ninety percent of eligible voters cast ballots and 98.6 percent of those voting authorized the IATSE international president to call a nationwide strike if he deemed it necessary. Following the strike vote, AMPTP returned to the bargaining table. Later, a strike date was set by the union, spurring the producers to meet the union's demands for the Basic Agreement. A tentative agreement was reached October 16, two days prior to the announced strike date. The bargaining teams of all 13 West Coast local unions unanimously recommended ratification.

A combined 63,209 IATSE members were eligible to vote on the two agreements, 45,402 members cast ballots. Voting on both agreements was conducted electronically over the past weekend, administered by the election services firm Honest Ballot.

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The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, or IATSE (full name: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada), is a labor union representing over 150,000 technicians, artisans and craftspersons in the entertainment industry, including live theatre, motion picture and television production, and trade shows in the United States and Canada.