

Pacific Media Workers Guild  
San Francisco Chronicle Contract Bargaining Bulletin  
Sept. 22, 2021

In our first two negotiating sessions with the San Francisco Chronicle, your Guild bargaining team has made a good-faith effort to negotiate a fair and reasonable union contract, as we have done for nearly 100 years.

But Chronicle management's proposal on Wednesday ignores that collaborative history and strikes at the core of many hard-fought and well-established labor rights and principles. It would strip the Guild -- and, most importantly, its members -- of many of the hard-won rights we have negotiated in our decades of contracts.

For example, the company wants to:

- Prohibit the Guild from representing all of its members by treating them as if they lived in one of the anti-union so-called "right-to-work" states.
- Shrink the Guild's size and scope substantially, revoking the rights of many long-standing members
- Undermine our ability to represent members in such areas as setting schedules and resisting punitive job assignments.
- Eliminate our ability to help our members strive for a workplace free of harassment and discrimination by preventing the Guild from using the current contractually guaranteed process for defending members.

There's more. As we know, the current merit pay system has deprived many hardworking employees -- even those getting stellar job reviews -- of much-deserved raises, but it did require the company to put a certain amount into raises. The company proposes eliminating any requirement to give merit raises and would give itself absolute discretion to decide who gets a raise and how much. It's not yet clear what the company's other salary proposals may be.

The company would also like to rescind its promise in the current contract to give union-represented employees the same health and wellness benefits as non-union employees, a vow it made several years ago. It would force the union to bargain to maintain equal benefits, including the company's right to withhold such benefits hostage in exchange for other concessions.

Some other tidbits that could hurt members include a proposal to slash our severance benefit -- for people laid off or taking buyouts -- in half, to a maximum of 26 weeks instead of a year of pay, depending on experience. The proposal would also remove the right of employees whose scheduled "weekend" falls on a holiday to receive a makeup for that holiday.

And the company would like to eliminate the possibility for anyone working overtime to choose comp time instead of overtime without regard to state and federal laws. Currently employees have a right to decide between overtime and comp time.

In many areas of the contract, the company claimed it was preserving "management rights" by revoking parts of the contract that protect employees' ability to have a say in their working conditions.

In other words, Chronicle management wants to do what it wants to do without its workers and their union standing up for their best interests and defending the legacies, principles and ethics of journalism.

As shocking as this radical proposal would be at any time, it comes in the midst of unprecedented demand among journalists and media employees across the industry to join unions, specifically the NewsGuild.

Our next bargaining session is scheduled for Oct. 6. Members are encouraged to observe. The Guild looks forward to fighting for its members' rights and best interests.

*Your Guild bargaining committee*

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