

November 18, 2013

Ms. Martha Waggoner
International Chairperson
The Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America
501 Third Street N.W.
Washington, D.C 2001-2791

Dear Ms. Waggoner:

I am a candidate for the upcoming election for Executive Officer of Local 39521 of the Pacific Media Workers Guild/TNG in California and I am deeply concerned over the validity of the status of certain new members of the Guild.

I am referring in particular to the action in San Francisco on October 19 of this year by the current Executive Committee of the local to admit as members in good standing more than 200 sign language interpreters at an organization called Purple Communications.

You are probably aware that one of our most able negotiators, Bruce Meachum, has been working diligently to negotiate a contract for the Purple Communications people for months. I am personally acquainted with Bruce, as he negotiated the first labor contract of the California Federation of Interpreters, a unit in the Guild that I co-founded in 1996. I have the highest regard for Bruce's industry, honesty and ingenuity. However, at this point, no collective bargaining agreement covering the Purple Communications workers has been achieved. All that has been accomplished by way of membership are signature cards from workers expressing their willingness to become members of our Guild.

In my reading, Guild Bylaws and Federal labor laws specify that members in good standing are those who have been accepted by the Guild and, under a valid collective bargaining agreement, are currently paying regular dues. Since the workers at Purple Communications are not covered by a contract, they cannot be said to be paying dues, and I am not aware that they have even paid initiation fees. Moreover, as far as I can determine, there has been no decision by the Representative Assembly to determine a certain amount of dues to be paid regularly by these members. Therefore, I believe they are not members in good standing.

As you know, only members in good standing are allowed to vote in union elections. Given the proximity of the Local's elections—mail-in ballots are scheduled to go out after Thanksgiving—I would appreciate clarification on this point as soon as possible. I am respectfully requesting that I and my campaign team be provided with the appropriate points and authorities that would allow Purple Communications workers to vote in these upcoming elections in apparent contravention of Guild Bylaws and Federal labor law.

Please do not misunderstand me, I welcome these brothers and sisters to our union, but I believe that until and unless they have paid their dues and have a valid work contract, they are not eligible to vote.

In Fraternity,

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