We had a great 2014! We were busier this year than in recent years and 2015 looks to be an even better year for our Membership with the passing of tax incentive bill AB1839!

We reached settlements with Warner Bros. over meal money violations. To date, WB has paid our members more than $40,000.00 in meal penalties that occurred from August 2013 on, and our Courier Dispatchers received an additional $23,000.00 in meal penalty payments.

We had a near-record turn out for the ratification meeting on January 11th regarding the tentative agreement with the AICP, which covers approximately 500-600 Members who work regularly in the commercial industry. Those in attendance voted at that time to reject the initial agreement, thus authorizing a strike action, and we are asking all members to contact the Call Board to sign up for picket line duty. Obviously, a strike is never the first choice in resolving issues and we are continuing to work towards an equitable solution. It was a spirited meeting, and I want to acknowledge all who attended for taking an active roll in their union and encourage all to do so. Go to ht399.org for updates on this issue.

As you know, we have not had a dues increase since 2010. To help put our Local on a sound financial footing going forward, beginning in April, our dues will go up $5.00 per month. This will also greatly reduce the need for special assessments in the future. Please read the “Dues Increase in 2015” article in this issue for much more information on this change.

We will continue to meet with all of our committees and look forward to greatly expanding our education classes in 2015. Our revamped website will roll out in February and our new callboard software system should be in place by the end of the first quarter. We will continue to be visiting you on sets to discuss your issues and concerns. I believe we’re making the difficult decisions that need to be made in order for our Membership to thrive and prosper into the future. We cannot do it without your support and counsel. I hope and encourage you to make every effort to participate in your Union and make this a great year!

I wish you and yours a happy and prosperous New Year!

Fraternally, Steve Dayan
I n mid-December, Congress passed, and the President signed the Omnibus Spending Bill. The legislation is lengthy, complex and controversial. Yes, it kept the doors of government open, but it also included a section dubbed the Multi-Employer Pension Reform Act of 2014, which makes major changes to the multi-employer funding and withdrawal liability rules. You may hear this new law referred to as MEPRA.

The changes under MEPRA are comprehensive, as we said controversial, and in some instances misunderstood. The media stories following the law’s passage have created a myriad of questions and generated emotions, running the gamut from concern to panic.

Hopefully this communication will -- answer questions that Retirees, Members, staff and representatives might have about the new law -- reduce Member/Retiree anxiety levels -- and point out what the legislation will do, what it won’t do and the specific impact it will have on the operations of the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust and your Motion Picture Plans.

As you know, we have a long-term commitment to help Teamsters members reach their financial goals. We believe our future funding outlook remains strong. The Western Conference Plan is the largest multi-employer pension plan in the country, with assets close to 37 billion dollars. We have never been deeply troubled, seriously underfunded or actives under the Western Conference Plan and will not do. It allows the benefits of retirees to be reduced in limited and specifically defined circumstances.

This is the section of the Act that has generated the most publicity and controversy. It amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 which prohibits a reduction of benefits in a retiree’s pension benefits. The legislation will allow a reduction, but only if a plan is “ Severely Underfunded” and in Critical and Declining Status and facing Insolvency in less than 20 years.” In reality, these are only a few plans across the Country that would face reductions, and the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Plan is not one of them.

**WHAT MEPRA WILL NOT DO**

★ It allows the benefits of retirees to be reduced in limited and specifically defined circumstances. This is the section of the Act that has generated the most publicity and controversy. It amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 which prohibits a reduction (cutback) in a retiree’s pension benefits. The legislation will allow a reduction, but only if a plan is “ Severely Underfunded” and in Critical and Declining Status and facing Insolvency in less than 20 years.” In reality, these are only a few plans across the Country that would face reductions, and the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Plan is not one of them.

★ It extends the Pension Protection Act (PPA). The PPA was originally passed in 2006 and was set to expire in 2014. The new law extends PPA indefinitely.

★ The changes under MEPRA are comprehensive, as we said controversial, and in some instances misunderstood. The media stories following the law’s passage have created a myriad of questions and generated emotions, running the gamut from concern to panic.

★ It increases the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation premiums for multi-employer plans. The premium, which is used to subsidize insolvent pension plans, will go from $12 to $26 per participant in 2015. Thereafter premiums are indexed based on the national average wage index.

★ It makes a number of technical changes to the original PPA. In general, the changes will ensure greater efficiency and quicker response.

**WHAT WILL MEPRA DO?**

★ It extends the Pension Protection Act (PPA). The PPA was originally passed in 2006 and was set to expire in 2014. The new law extends PPA indefinitely.

★ It increases the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation premiums for multi-employer plans. The premium, which is used to subsidize insolvent pension plans, will go from $12 to $26 per participant in 2015. Thereafter premiums are indexed based on the national average wage index.

★ It will NOT reduce retirement benefits of retirees or active members under the Western Conference Plan and MEPRA. We have never been deeply troubled, seriously underfunded or actives under the Western Conference Plan and all Members will not do.

★ It will NOT affect our asset or liability base. The Western Conference Plan is the largest multi-employer plan in the United States, and we continue to grow. Our assets are close to 37 billion dollars.

★ It will NOT affect how our assets are invested. Over the past 20 years, our annual return on investments has averaged 8.4%.

★ In short, the new law will NOT affect the operations of our Plan and the benefits of our retirees and members will NOT be reduced.

★ In light of the controversy and misinformation generated by the passage of MEPRA, I wanted to share this information with you.

In Union,

Chuck Mack, Chairman WCTPT
COMMERCIALS ARE EVOLVING INDUSTRY

By Matthew Klekner

The Entertainment Industry is a cornerstone of the Los Angeles economy. While motion pictures and television productions get the lion’s share of all the press, commercial production should not be overlooked.

Much like their long-form counterparts, commercials are a key economic indicator of a thriving Entertainment Industry. The money spent on commercials is an around Los Angeles trickles down and ripples throughout every single good and services sector in the economy, and provides Union jobs for our Members.

The Local 399 Commercial roster is the same Industry Experience roster as features and television, but there are approximately 700 Members working in commercials full time. This includes about 200 Drivers and Gang Bosses (Which are the equivalent of Captains in TV/film) and about 200 Location Scout/Managers, in addition to roughly 100 Wranglers, Animal Handlers and Trainees. This represents about 20% of total Membership.

Commercial production is a different beast than film and television. As Business Agent Ed Duffy, who represents Commercial Location Scout/Managers, explains:

“Once a commercial budget is approved and awarded to a commercial company, it could be 4 or 5 days before they have to shoot a location and most departments put together their entire crew and schedule just days before a shoot.”

“It’s very rapid and fast paced. That’s not to say that television and features are not, but they are in and out of situations very quickly. Because of that, they have to hit the ground running and setup lot faster” Business Agent Joshua Staheli commented. “In the 5 years since I worked full-time in commercials we’ve seen the size of the trucks shrink and the number of locations shot in a day grow.”

Commercial productions can bring a film crew of 100 people to up to 4 or more locations per day. Each location requires dressing, rigging, shooting and complete wrap out. All of the crew cars, picture cars, crew shuttles, equipment trucks and catering trucks have to be accounted for on multiple fronts in a day.

“Commercial productions get the lion’s share of all the work in commercials. They arrange contracts, pull permits, and maintain a relationship with the city and with homeowners in neighborhoods we’re filming in.”

From 2009 through 2013, Commercial producers working in Los Angeles have shifted approximately 11% of their work from soundstages to on-location filming due to shrinking production budgets, according to the Association of Independent Commercial Producers’ (AICP) Annual Industry Survey.

Over the past few years, FilmL.A. has observed explosive growth in the production of Commercials for web-based distribution. This reflects a change in the Commercial production market as increased broadband connectivity, coupled with the proliferation of smartphones, tablets and other media consumption devices, has created promising new opportunities for online advertising.

“A “NO” VOTE AUTHORIZES A STRIKE. PLEASE VISIT HT399.ORG TO RECEIVE THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION REGARDING THE SITUATION. ALL MEMBERS WORKING IN THE COMMERCIAL INDUSTRY NEED TO REGISTER FOR PICKET LINE DUTY WITH THE CALL BOARD (818) 985-7550

The current AICP Contract is set to expire on January 31st, 2015. Per the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Constitution a “no” vote authorizes a strike action. All Members working in the Commercial Industry are expected to register for Picket Line Duty with the Call Board by phone (818) 985-7550 or by email: callboard@lt399.org (If emailing the Call Board, please provide your First & Last Name, Craft, Phone Number and Email Address).

Please head to ht399.org to get the most up to date information regarding the Commercial Contract.
November: Dues + $20 late fee

December: Dues + $30 late fee

(You will go suspended if you fail to pay or before the last business day of this month)

At what point am I at risk of being suspended?

Dues are due within the months of January, July, and October. Any payment received outside of these months will result in a late fee. If you fail to pay within the month your dues are late, late fees will increase each month until suspension. Please see the chart below for a visual representation of when dues are due, when fees are expected and when suspension will occur.

Please see the chart below for a visual breakdown of when dues are due.

How often are dues due?

A Member’s Dues are to be paid on a Quarterly System. January, April, July and October are the months in which payment is expected. Payment outside of these 4 months will result in additional late fees.

What is a quarterly payment?

A quarterly payment is the amount of dues you are required to pay quarterly. If you are currently paying biweekly dues, your quarterly dues will be four times the amount you have been paying each week. If you are currently paying monthly dues, your quarterly dues will be three times the amount you have been paying each month.

Why does it cost more if I pay online or over the phone?

When you pay online or over the phone your payment card has to be run as credit. The additional amount you are paying is the merchant charges we. The amount you are paying in credit card fees is proportional to the amount you are paying for dues.

How does the Local use the Member’s dues money?

The following is not intended to be exhaustive but are some of the ways dues help pay for operating costs.

- Negotiates collective bargaining agreements with major studios that are part of multi-billion dollar corporations.
- Chooses independent producers around the country to make sure our Members are treated properly.
- At times, must litigate issues with the producers either in a court of law or arbitration, which costs significant money in attorney’s fees and other costs.
- Must enforce our contracts to their fullest extent, which means we must employ the best Business Agents possible who work 24/7 to represent you. These employees generate income, which means they came from well paying jobs. In order to attract talent we need to compete in the areas of wages and benefits to lure them away from their employers.
- Must participate in International affairs to make sure other Locals do not destroy each other’s ability to work in other jurisdictions. These other Locals now want to take away your right to work outside of Hollywood.
- Must conduct maintenance and repairs to the 399 Union Hall systems and facilities. The total cost is the line cost of running Local 399 is not cheap and our Members’ dues help pay for the remaining balance.

What are the methods Members can use to pay their dues balance?

A Member can pay their dues balance online, via phone or come to the union hall and leave a check. Members who are suspended will not be able to pay online, via phone or leave a check.

In 2015 we will be increasing dues moderately, by $5.00 per month, bringing the new quarterly total to $273.00. In light of this change, we want to take a moment to explain the importance of Membership dues and the reasons behind this rate increase. If there are any questions that you do not see answered below, please feel free to contact the Local by emailing office@ht399.org.

We will also be sending official notices in the mail when the dues increase is set to take place.

Let me answer that in 2 parts:

- Simply put, our dues increases have not kept up with wage increases and inflation.
- Per our International Constitution, Article X, Members of all Locals are required to pay a minimum of 2 and a half times their hourly rate in the form of monthly dues payments In 2010, Local 399 addressed a letter to the Membership stating that the dues rate at that time should have been $91 per month. However, the Executive Board at that time increased the dues to only $86 per month. Meanwhile, our wages have increased a compounded 8% since that time. As our wages increased our dues should have as well. Our current dues rate should be $110 per month. In light of that fact, we are proposing a more moderate increase of $5.00 per month, bringing the total monthly rate to $91.

Why are dues set to increase?

A dues increase is expected. Payment outside of these months will result in a late fee. If you fail to pay within the month your dues are due, late fees will increase each month until suspension. Please see the chart below for a visual representation of when dues are due, when fees are expected and when suspension will occur.

We will also be sending official notices in the mail when the dues increase is set to take place.

If you get suspended, you will be expected to pay re-initiation fees in order to restore you to a status of “Member in good standing”.

First suspension is $200.

Second Suspension is $400, if the second suspension is within 3 years of the first offense.

Third Suspension is $600, if the third suspension is within 3 years of the second offense.

Thereafter is $1200. Under this new procedure, the re-initiation fee for First Suspension will no longer be waived.

Dues increase by 3%. Keep in mind that we are starting from a dues rate of $86.00 per month. If your wages increase 3% on August 1, 2016, if your wages increase 3% on August 1, 2016, your dues rate would also increase by 3%. We propose to increase dues by the same percentage as your wages are increased on August 1st of each year, rounded to the nearest dollar. We are raising the dues on April 1, 2015, but additional increases will not take effect until August 1, 2016. So for example, since your dues rate will be $91.00 per month by August 1, 2016, if your wages increase 3% on August 1, 2016, your dues rate would also increase by 3%. Keep in mind that we are starting from a dues rate that is $2.00 below the $103 per month you should be charged, so your dues rate is still a discounted rate.

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Finding an Actor is easy. Head to any Starbucks in Los Angeles and I’ll bet you will find one. Head to the beach, or to the mall, or ask around at your favorite restaurant, and I bet you will find even more. The hard part is not finding an Actor; it is finding the perfect Actor for a role.

Casting Directors and Casting Associates, who have been Members of Local 399 since they were organized in 2006, take on this search for perfection daily. A Casting Department must find and audition Actors for every role in a television or film production. On any given day this could range from lead roles, to bit parts or to cattle calls for behind the scenes extras. To handle the massive task of casting dozens, and even hundreds of roles, a Casting Director needs a seasoned Casting Associate to act as their right hand.

The issues facing the Casting Associates will be taken up in earnest this year as Local 399 begins to plan for their new Collective Bargaining agreement, which is up to this very coming September.

In the Spring of this year the Union and the Steering Committee will meet with Casting Directors and Casting Associates to develop ideas about what they need to get in their new collective bargaining agreement and the best plan of attack to move forward.

“One of my concerns,” says Hooper, “is if we get the wages up to where we want them, the studio has the option of saying the Associate position is just an assistant position, and assistants are all non-union. So all the benefits we have fought for get out the window.”

Hooper would also like to see Local 399 implement a permit system for new Casting Associates, to make sure the current Members are working before they bring new ones in.

“I know with the Drivers, they have to all be employed when they get into permits so I think there is precedent there, which I hope could be applied to our Craft as well,” says Hooper.

“We have a very good working relationship,” says Duffy. We are working with them on a continual basis and I think that everyone is striving hard to focus on improving their salary position and to address any other concerns.

“Steve (Dayan) has been very pro-active with the Associates,” says Hooper. “I know he has ideas and plans to get us what we need and has awareness of how little we are paid.”

“And hopefully we can get the support of the Drivers and Location Managers and all the other crafts in 399, so that Hollywood understands our plight and supports us in our fight for what we want next year, which is a living wage,” says Hooper.

We appreciate your understanding and patience during this time. Potentially affected individuals can review the full text of the individual notifications and learn other information about how to protect yourself from identity theft and other potential loss at sonyictures.com.”
Application for the 2015-2016 Academic Year of the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

Deadline March 31st, 2015

James R. Hoffa became a Teamsters Member in 1934, served as General President for 14 years, and, in recognition of his tireless service to the Union, was honored as General President Emeritus for life. At the November 1999 General Executive Board Meeting, then Secretary-Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel presented a resolution to establish the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Scholarship applicants compete in one of the five geographic regions where the Teamsters Union affiliate is located. One category of awards totals $10,000 each. These four-year scholarships are disbursed at the rate of $2,500 per year and are renewable annually. Other awards are one-time $1,000 grants. These scholarships are disbursed to the college or university at the beginning of the recipient’s freshman year. Eligibility requirements and application procedures are the same for all awards. Recipients are selected by an impartial committee of University admissions and financial aid directors based on academic achievement, SAT/ACT scores, character, potential and financial need. We consider all applicants without regard to race, religion, gender, disability or any other legally protected status.

For more information about this program, visit our website at teamster.org/scholarship

The scholarship Fund has established some guidelines to be used by students when deciding whether or not to apply to this program. Applicants should:

1. Rank in the top 15% of their high school class
2. Have, or expect to have, excellent SAT or ACT scores
3. Demonstrate Financial Needs

Due to the highly competitive nature of the program and the large number of applicants, students should carefully consider these criteria before submitting an application.

GUIDELINES:

The scholarship Fund has established some guidelines to be used by students when deciding whether or not to apply to this program. Applicants should:

1. Submit the completed application to Local 399
2. Do not send any IRS statements or W-2 forms. The Scholarship Fund will not accept these documents
3. Do not send a picture

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Students:

Applicants to the current program must graduate from high school during the 2014-2015 academic year. Students participating in a concurrent enrollment program, where they are attending college courses prior to completion of their high school requirements, must apply the year before they begin full-time college coursework.

The applicant must be a son, daughter, or financially dependent grandchild of a Teamsters Member. Financially dependent grandchildren and other financial dependents (i.e., stepchildren and wards) of Teamsters Members are eligible if the Member contributes in excess of 50% of the applicant’s financial support and if the applicant is a financial dependent of the Member for federal income tax purposes.

Teamster Member Relation:

In the application, the Teamster Member whose child, financially dependent grandchild or other qualifying financial dependent is applying for the scholarship is referred to in the application form as “Teamster Member Relation.”

The applicant’s Teamster Member Relation must have been a Member in “good standing” as defined in Article X, Section 5 of the International Constitution on the application deadline of March 31, 2015. In addition, the Teamster Member Relation must not have been a full-time elected officer or full-time employee of the International or Teamsters Union during this period.

If the applicant’s Teamster Member Relation is retired, he or she must be retired from a craft represented by his or her local Union and must have been a Member in good standing for 5 years prior to his or her retirement. In addition, the retired Teamsters Member Relation must not have been a full-time elected officer or full-time employee of the International or Teamsters Union affiliate during this period.

A seasonal employee eligible to vote pursuant to Article XXII, Sec. 4 (c) of the International Constitution, shall also qualify as a Teamster Member Relation.

To receive an application, come down to the Local or follow this link to find the application online: goo.gl/LbiLCy.

Please be sure to read through the application carefully to ensure you are not missing any piece and are also eligible to apply. If you have any questions please email: scholarship@teamster.org.

Wishing all of our applicants the best of luck!

Make sure you:

1. Do not send the application directly to the Scholarship Fund
2. Send the completed application to Local 399
3. Do not send any IRS statements or W-2 forms. The Scholarship Fund will not accept these documents
4. Do not send a picture
To RSVP contact Business Agent Lindsay Dougherty at ldougherty@ht399.org or (818) 432-3319 for use of the rest or even the agency is not ordered to change the actual regulation.

The new law will remain in effect until September 30, 2015, or until the FMCSA completes a study involving the use of real drivers in their natural environment, not in a lab. The FMCSA is mandated to begin the study unit no later than 90 days of the law taking effect. FMCSA has indicated it is preparing a Federal Register Notice to advise the public that it is suspending enforcement of the rest requirements.

FMCSA also stated it is working with state and federal motor carrier enforcement personnel to ensure a smooth transition back to the prior version of the 34-hour restart.

Reminder to ALL MEMBERS – Drivers, Casting, Wranglers, Trainers and Location Managers please remember to call in ALL your shows. All Transportation Coordinators and Captains are to send in daily rundown to the Call Board everyday.

Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility as a Trainer to report non-production meetings. Section 32(n) of the Teamster 399 Bylaws, “A Member having knowledge of a non-Union production or a proposed non-Union production shall immediately report the same to the Local Union business office.”

Working Non Union without any benefits not only undermines your future, but also that of your fellow Teamster sisters and brothers. You can call the callboard anonymously, email a call sheet or call your favorite Business Agent. We will make every effort to get the project signed, so that you can receive the benefits that you deserve.

Make sure you are up to date with your safety classes to prevent suspension from the roster. You can check your status online at csat.org and click on the General Access link or call Contract Services 818-565-0550. This is VERY important. Being suspended for an extended period of time will affect your grouping.

Please make sure to open ALL of Contract Service’s mail. If they send you something in the mail, they may require a response. Failure to pay attention to their announcements and requests could affect your work and your grouping.

Locality Educational Classes for 2015 will be announced by February 1st. Please check ht399.org for more information.

Associate Contracting Directors availability list is being kept at the Callboard. If you are available and looking for work please register by calling (818) 985-7550.

Laminated Social Security cards are not valid as evidence of employment authorization if the card reads on the back “not valid if laminated.” Lamination of such cards renders them invalid. Employers may accept a Social Security card if it has not been signed. Employers cannot accept printouts in lieu of the Social Security card. printed Social Security card issued by the Social Security Administration is acceptable.

Don’t forget to come to 1st Quarter Days! They must be received before the last business day in January to avoid any late fees. Head to ht399.org to pay online!

Every weekend we have a Business Agent that is on-call. To reach the on-call Agent please call: (818) 397-2131.

Remember: Starting January 30, 2015, the OSHA requirements for medical exam

never miss a dues payment, Membership gathering or important announcements and requests could affect your work and your grouping.

If they send you some-