



April 16, 2015

Ms. Mary McColl, Executive Director
Mr. Nick Wyman, President
Actors' Equity Association
165 West 46th Street
New York, NY 10036

Subject: 99-Seat Agreement – OPPOSE

Dear Ms. McColl and Mr. Wyman,

The Entertainment Committee of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) strongly opposes the Actors' Equity 99-Seat Agreement, which would mandate an hourly minimum wage for its members when they perform or rehearse in L.A.'s small venues.

For decades, Actors' Equity has agreed not to enforce its usual contracts for venues of 99 seats or fewer. The argument for this exemption is one that is agreed upon by nearly all of the union's members – that honing the actors' skills and gaining exposure on smaller stages pays off for actors in the long run by leading to bigger paydays on screen or in larger theaters that pay full union wages.

There is no nexus or event that justifies a move like this, which is highly opposed by your own members. They have told us how they fear this agreement will stifle the theatres and result in substantially less work. These actors understand the financial realities of trying to produce in small theaters and so they willingly volunteer their time and talents – and as a result, neighborhoods like our North Hollywood Arts District flourish.

Forcing small theatre owners and producers to pay minimum wage instead of the much lower daily stipends would bankrupt small theatres, many of which are run by nonprofit organizations. The NoHo Arts District will see their small theatres close their doors, and as a result, so will the vendors and businesses relying on these theatres.

VICA urges you to oppose this proposal's mandate of an hourly minimum wage for its members when they perform or rehearse in L.A.'s small venues. We cannot afford the inevitable loss in culture, economic activity and talent development.

Sincerely,

David Phelps
Chair, VICA Entertainment Committee

Pam Elyea
Co-Chair, VICA Entertainment Committee

Maricela Gomez
Co-Chair, VICA Entertainment Committee