

TAG MEMBERS ON THE MARCH



Animation Guild members turned out for the annual May Day March in Downtown Los Angeles on Saturday, March 1.

The theme for this year's march was "The Work Continues/La Lucha Sigue," focusing on lifting up the rights of immigrants and workers, and fighting against anti-Asian hate. Instead of taking place in MacArthur Park, as it has in years past, this year's event was a hybrid of march and caravan, starting in Chinatown at the Los Angeles State Historic Park, then moving through Olvera Street to Little Tokyo and ending at the steps of City Hall.

Many in the TAG delegation made signs for the event and joined with members of other IATSE Locals, as well as community groups and organizations. Messages on signs and clothing expressed support for four bills

IN THIS ISSUE

TAG Members on the March	1
From the President	4
From the Business Representative	6
Field Rep Corner	8
Mental Health & Resources for TAG Members	10
The Personal Experience of a Freelance Animation Timing Director	12
Celebrating Guild Families	15
Vanguard Virtual Education: Target Date Investments	16
Kindred Spirits 2021 Online Fundraiser	17
In Memoriam	18
Upcoming Events at the Animation Guild	19

THE PEGBOARD is published monthly by The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839
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Guild and sent to 1105 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank, CA 91505.



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focusing on immigrant rights: The American Dream & Promise Act, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, the Citizenship for Essential Workers Act, and most importantly, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, which maps a path to citizenship for 5 million undocumented essential workers who have been critical to the pandemic response and are crucial to economic recover in the United States. Others showed support for passing pro labor laws like the Protecting the Right to Organize Act—the PRO Act—rising against racial violence, and remembering those who were lost to the COVID-19 pandemic that hit immigrants, people of color, and workers especially hard.

— **Leslie Simmons**

*TAG Field Representative
and Political Coordinator*



**FROM THE PRESIDENT
JEANETTE MORENO KING**



**THE PEAKS AND
VALLEYS OF
THE ANIMATION
INDUSTRY**

Like most of my peers, I have had to be on a constant job hunt. Just about every eight months to a year, I'd be looking for my next gig. Pre-pandemic, I wouldn't even bother to decorate my workspace because I just didn't want to deal with the hassle of packing it all up one day. My garage is full of boxes from previous jobs that I never bothered to unpack—the layers like my own archeological dig.

Now this is partially by my own design. I tend to get antsy if I'm at a job for too long or if I come in on a show in a later season when all the problems have already been solved. I enjoy this vagabond career. I get a charge out of working a first season show. Career uncertainty is the extent of my thrill-seeking though. You will never get me to jump out of an airplane but I will gladly jump onto a show where everything has yet to be figured out and the possibility of failure looms large.

I've been pretty lucky. Most of my breaks between jobs have lasted about a month or two; if I don't count the almost year break I had when all of Hollywood shut down after 9/11 or the months off during the writers strike in 2007 (which was a perfect excuse to extend my maternity leave). Living off of my savings softened those big valleys.

The explosion in animation production right now is unlike the peaks in the past, with all the various streaming services and traditional broadcast and cable networks fighting to compete. Where I used to have gaps, now I have overlap. This demand has also opened the door to women and people of diverse backgrounds to step into leadership roles. There is more diversity among showrunners and leadership than there ever was. Personally, it took this peak for someone to finally give me the chance to be a Supervising Director, a role I took on with gusto, as it is the ultimate thrill ride.

Six years ago, a Warner Bros. executive told me that demand for animation would fizzle out in five years. Well, we are now at the Mount Everest of peaks with no clue when the descent will start. Save your money, my union kin! Hopefully the next valley won't be too steep and we can glide together to the next peak.

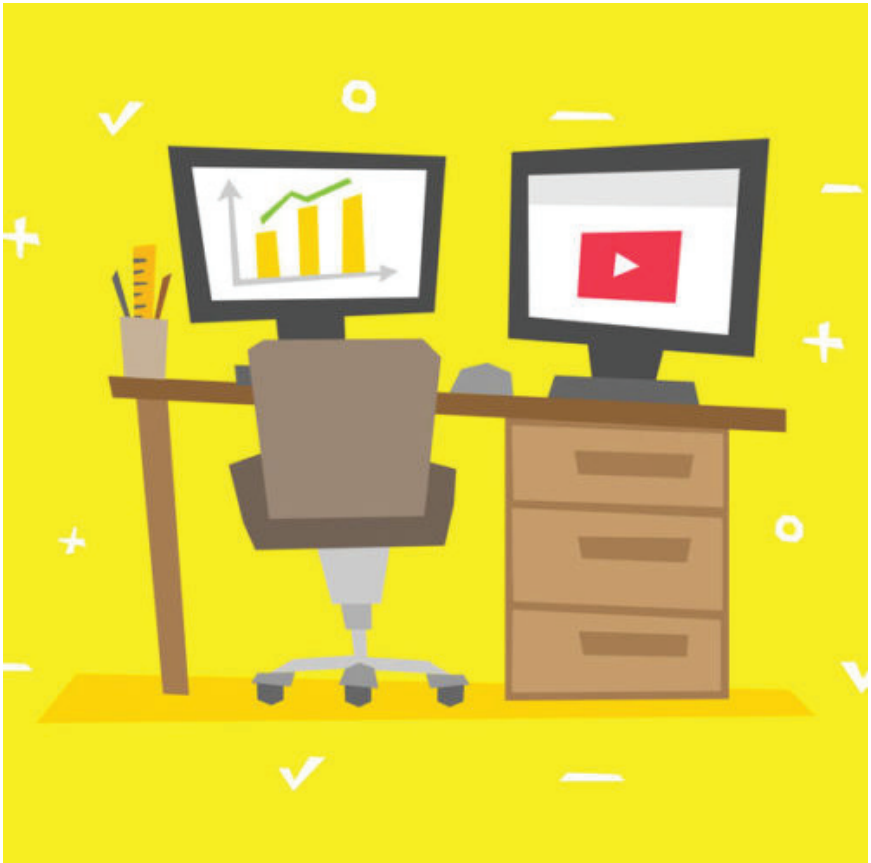
In solidarity,

Jeanette Moreno King

President

The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839

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FROM THE BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE STEVE KAPLAN



EXCITING UPDATES

The IATSE Basic Agreement negotiations started on Monday, May 17. I have been attending the IATSE Negotiation Committee meetings and have been asked to join the subcommittee on Benefits Funding as an MPI Plan Director. While it may be expected for me to share more information and news about the impending negotiations, I would like to take this opportunity to share some exciting news about changes that are taking place at the Guild. Rest assured that my next two Pegboard articles will likely address the ongoing negotiations in order to keep you informed.

MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR

The positions of Member Services Coordinator and Field Representative were opened in early 2020, but progress on filling the positions halted as soon as the pandemic forced us out of the Guild offices. Over the course of the challenging year, connecting with each other as a community has played an increasingly important role, and not having someone in a position that supports member engagement programs has certainly been felt. Members of the Executive Board asked that hiring a new Member Services Coordinator be a priority, and I am happy to say that the hiring group of Board members has made a decision. The final details are being worked out with the candidate, and I look forward to introducing this person to you as soon as possible.

TAG 401(k) PLAN PARTICIPANT SUPPORT

The Guild's 401(k) plan has seen steady growth since its inception. The plan currently has 4,154 participants with over \$510 million in assets. However, as the plan grew in participants and assets, we counted on Plan Administrator Marta Strohl to be the only avenue for participant support throughout all the growth. Answering participant questions and following up on requests to restart or join the plan is enough work for a

team of people, and Marta becomes extremely busy during the beginning of the year when she has to manage the administration of the annual non-discrimination testing and the annual audit. In order to provide scalable support with an eye towards modernizing the participant experience, we have recently engaged the third-party administrator CBIZ to help provide additional support to the plan participants.

INCREASING MEMBER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

I expect the addition of a Member Services Coordinator to bring steady and increasing help to the membership and committees by reinvigorating our member engagement plans as well as providing a staff liaison to our growing number of membership committees. I also expect that CBIZ will be able to bring a new level of support and services to our 401(k) plan participants and help us make the plan participation experience better.

Please continue to stay safe, and if you haven't already, please consider taking the COVID vaccine so we can all put this crisis behind us.

In Solidarity,

Steve Kaplan

Business Representative

The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839

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Don't miss out on Animation Guild events! Keep your contact information up-to-date and sign up for our email list at <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/change-address/>. You can GO GREEN—and save the Guild printing and mailing costs—by choosing to view our TAG publications digitally rather than receiving a hard copy in the mail. Visit <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/publication-preferences/>.



THE PRO ACT HELPS WORKERS AND THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE!

Recently, Congress re-introduced a bill that would make it easier for workers to organize and seek union representation. The bill – The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act – is the most significant worker empowerment legislation since the Great Depression.

For TAG members, it's not something most are terribly familiar with. When you're hired at a studio like Disney or Cartoon Network, you're working under a contract that's been in place for decades and has grown and changed with the industry. But for many workers without union representation, organizing is a daunting task that can take years to successfully plan and execute to ensure the workers win.

But as we've seen with the Amazon workers in Bessamer, AL, most recently, despite a high-profile campaign, the decision to unionize warehouse workers failed. The PRO Act could have changed the outcome if it was in place.

With a pro-worker majority in the House, Senate, and White House, America's labor movement has a real chance to build the power of working people like never before.

If passed, it would dramatically increase penalties for employers that violate workers' rights, protect strikes and other protest activity, streamline the process for reaching a collective bargaining agreement once a union is formed, and so much more.

The PRO Act isn't just any bill – it's civil rights legislation, protecting women, immigrants, people of color, and the LGBTQ community, and it's also an economic stimulus, putting more money in the pockets of workers, which helps our economy build back better. It's a generational opportunity for the more than 60 million workers who want to join a union but haven't found the path to get there under current law.

The bill was originally passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last year, but an anti-worker majority in the Senate blocked it. This

motivated workers across the country this past election cycle to get out the vote and mobilize a pro-worker message that resonates in the House, Senate, and White House. Working people won a mandate, and now it's time for those we put in power to pass this legislation.

What can TAG members do?

- Call your representatives. Even though we know Sens. Diane Feinstein and Alex Padilla support the PRO Act, it helps to still contact their offices to show support for the bill. They keep track of those calling in support of something they do, as much as they track outreach by constituents who don't.

Contact your senators here: <https://tinyurl.com/ProAct-CallReps>

- Talk about the PRO Act to your friends and family in other states. Let them know that the bill helps you and them in giving workers a voice in the workplace.

If you have family members in Arizona, it's important for them to reach out to Sens. Mark Kelly and Krysten Sinema, who have yet to sign on as sponsors for the bill.

Our labor laws are outdated and no longer protect our right to form and join unions. The PRO Act is the most significant worker empowerment legislation since the Great Depression. The PRO Act will:

- Hold corporations accountable for union-busting.
- Protect workers' rights to form and join unions, including in new industries like Big Tech.
- Repeal "right to work" laws.

Stronger unions mean higher wages, safer working conditions, and dignity for all people who work.

Passing the PRO Act will be our first step in getting there.

In solidarity,

Leslie Simmons

Field Representative/Political Coordinator

The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839

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Call or text: 747.238.0287

MENTAL HEALTH & RESOURCES FOR TAG MEMBERS

More than a year of sheltering in place has taken its toll, and Mental Health Awareness Month offers an opportunity to explore MPI Wellness and other programs to help you cope and heal as we return to our altered old ways of life.

MPI RESOURCES

MPI Wellness Programs embrace the mental and emotional sides of well-being with offerings such as access to a behavioral health app and free classes addressing stress and other mental health-related conditions.

Sanvello App

This app has tools for dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression. While not designed for urgent care needs, it provides a variety of clinical techniques to support mental wellness. Step-by-step audio lessons are based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and a daily health tracker helps you understand how your exercise, sleep, and caffeine habits can affect your mood. There are also community support groups where you can anonymously share personal stories and advice with others in your same situation.



LIFE CAN BE HARD.

**YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
DOESN'T HAVE TO
SUFFER.**

**GET INFORMATION AND
TOOLS THAT CAN HELP.**

Free Zoom Classes

MPI's new Wellness Coordinator, Brenda Weiner, who developed the Wellness Program from scratch with MPI's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Janet Spinner, uses her own teaching (yoga and fitness) to keep in touch in real time with what Participants need. She sends out regular surveys and uses feedback to hire instructors and create free Zoom classes for physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Most classes related to mental and emotional health are conducted by staff from Health Net or the Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital. Throughout the pandemic, the Wellness Program offered classes for resilience and self-care, music for stress relief, grief support, suicide prevention and intervention training, and protecting your mental well-being in the time of COVID.

The class schedule can be found at the MPI website:

<https://www.mpiphp.org/home/wellness>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Behind the Scenes Mental Health Screening Site

<https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/behind-the-scenes>

Free Headspace subscriptions for LA County residents

<https://www.headspace.com/lacounty>

MPTF Counseling Services

<https://mptf.com/services/#counseling>

THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A FREELANCE ANIMATION TIMING DIRECTOR

The Timing Committee asked an animation timing director to describe their work and what it's like to work as a freelancer (we gave them the option to share their opinion without revealing their name).

Here is our conversation:

How long have you worked in animation and in what types of positions?

I've been working in animation for—yikes!—45 years. I began my career as an animator and spent most of it as a director. I've also designed characters, reviewed and written scripts, been a supervising director, supervising producer, directed features, and served as head of story on one major one. I also co-created my own pre-school series that aired two seasons on Nick Jr. and airs internationally on Netflix. I've also been a timing director—first in-between directing gigs, then full-time.

What skills and experience are necessary to be a good timing director?

I believe that the best timing directors are animators. An understanding of animation fundamentals is necessary, as is a good ear and the ability to ACT. Just because poses approved in a storyboard appear to tell a story in an animatic does NOT mean they will animate well. Timing directors catch sliding feet, missing breakdowns, lack of weight, poor eye direction, too slow or too fast camera moves—and that's just the obvious things. We make sure jokes hit their mark, emotional beats are felt, story points communicate clearly. If you laugh or cry as the writer and director intended, everyone is happy and there's little need for retakes—the timing directors did their job.

Artwork by John McIntyre.



Animation timing, under the current Union contract, may be paid hourly, daily, weekly, or per “foot” (2/3 second). How does working freelance compare to working on salary?

The first and obvious difference, of course, is pay. Freelance footage rates are substantially less than in-house salaries—even starting salaries.

And the injustice with footage rates is that our pay has nothing to do with hours worked: we are paid the same whether it’s one character or 12, one camera move or seven.

One example: I had just started freelance timing on a show. I enjoyed it—very funny, wonderful crew. But suddenly I was hit with a wild party sequence—two scenes—with foreground, mid-ground, and background characters dancing, hostesses walking with trays of drinks, the main character walking through, interacting with everyone—and a rock band playing in the far background. There had to be at least 12 characters, and then the band! The two scenes were only 14 feet—but took me a very full eight hours to complete. My compensation, at \$4 per foot? A whopping \$56. NOT a good day. To [the producer’s] credit, she kept her word to give me a simple batch next time. However, you never make up for something like that. The only solution is to keep it from happening ever again, by doing away with footage rates.

How else has freelance compensation compared to being paid a salary?

Perhaps even more insidious: benefit hours—you know, the ones that determine our health coverage and pension? Well, those hours are NOT based on hours worked—but on footage. Every salaried artist in every category in the Union is credited a full 40 hours per week, regardless of their output—which changes with episode complexity. Not so for us freelancers. For some inexplicable reason, we are given eight hours [health and pension] credit for each 100 feet. My average output is closer to 50 feet a day—which means I work TWO full days for every ONE day I’m credited. Result? I am losing my health coverage at the end of November, after accruing 525 freelance “hours” in 2020. If I had received a day’s benefit for each eight hours [worked], I would have accrued 1,050 hours, and my health coverage would continue until 2022. I am far from the only person this has happened to. If that isn’t a clear distinction of how unfair freelance footage rates are, I don’t know what is.

Is there anything else you would like other members in TAG to know about freelance timing directors?

Yes. We need your support. We all love this medium, but we can't live on that. Animation is a community of artists. We need to stand together because we are all vulnerable. If you are unsure of what a timing director does—and you are not alone in that—please ask us! Talk to us. We'd love to share the ways our work helps you to shine, too. Please stand by the timing directors and help us gain a fair living wage this time around.

If you are an animation timing director and have a story to share or wish to learn more about the Timing Committee, please contact us at: timingcommittee839@gmail.com.

The artist interviewed provided this drawing, too!



CELEBRATING GUILD FAMILIES

The Family and Membership (FAM) Committee is highlighting Guild parents in celebration of Mother's Day (May), Father's Day (June), and National Parents' Day (July) 2021. This month, they chatted with Guild parents Fawn Veerasunthorn and Ryan Green, and their daughter, Kina. Fawn is Head of Story at Walt Disney Animation Studios, where she recently completed work on *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Ryan is Story Lead on *Us Again* and Director for the Short Circuit program at Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fawn: I wouldn't [have been] able to finish *Raya* last year without Ryan flexing his ultimate dad powers.

Ryan: [L]uckily Fawn and I have been able to zig while the other is zagging enough to make it work. The world needs art, but the world also needs parents to be present in the lives of their children. Disney Animation...has been very understanding of family life and work/life balance, and I feel very fortunate that Fawn and I have been able to have careers AND build a family.

Conversation: Fawn and Kina on Citizenship

Fawn: I'm an American now, just like you.

Kina: What does that mean?

Fawn: It means I can vote. I get to pick who becomes the president.

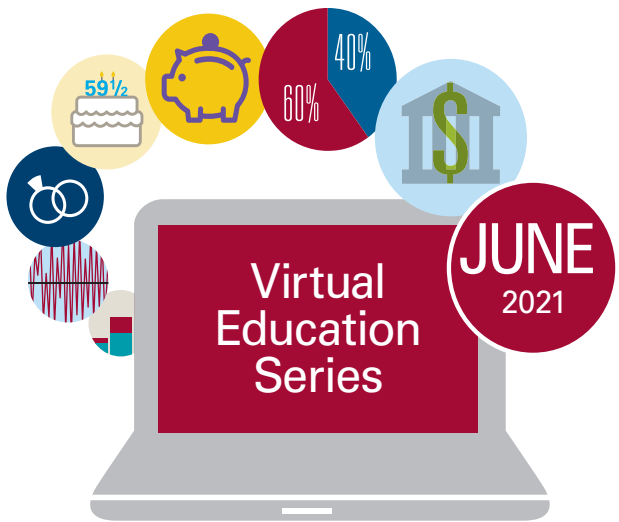
Kina: You are the president!

Fawn: LOL. I am not, but you can become a president . . . one day . . . if you want.

Kina: But I don't want to be president. I JUST WANT TO BE MYSELF!!!!



*Crafting our family's future:
April 2021, Fawn is an American Citizen!*



You're invited

Mark your calendar! A Vanguard representative will be conducting virtual education webinars.

Target-Date Investments

Teaches how target-date investments work, how to choose one, and what happens on the target date.

Date	Time (all times shown Pacific time)
June 4, 2021	6 a.m., 9 a.m., and 12 noon
June 7, 2021	11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 5 p.m.

Register at https://webinars.on24.com/Vanguard_IIG/VES2021.



IN MEMORIAM

Barbara DeLiso d. 11/1/2020 – Barbara DeLiso worked as a Xerox Processor at Hanna-Barbera Productions, Walt Disney Feature Animation, and Rich Entertainment Group. She was 82.

Gisele Recinos d. 2/20/2021 – Throughout her career, Gisele Recinos was an Inbetweeners, Breakdown Artist, and Assistant Animator at DreamWorks Animation, Walt Disney Feature Animation, and The Baer Animation Company. She also worked as a Cel Painter for Hanna-Barbera Productions.

Jane Bonnet d. 3/4/2021 – Jane Bonnet worked at Walt Disney Feature Animation and Walt Disney Television Animation. She started as an Inbetweeners and worked her way up to Key Assistant Animator.

Sam Cornell d. 5/01/2021 – Industry veteran Sam Cornell is known for his varied work on *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, *The Rugrats Movie*, *The Wuzzles*, and *Shinbone Alley*. His many roles included Storyboard Artist, Layout Artist, and Title Designer. He also directed numerous commercials with classic characters such as Tony the Tiger and the Keebler Elves.

Ron Campbell d. 1/22/2021 – Australian-born Ron Campbell began his career in the late 1950s working on cartoons such as *Popeye* and *Beetle Bailey*. Over the course of his career, he worked as an Animator, Producer, Director, and Storyboard Artist. His many credits also include *The Flintstones*, *Scooby-Doo*, *The Jetsons*, and *The Smurfs*. He is best-known for directing the 1960's TV cartoon series *The Beatles* and contributing to the animation for *Yellow Submarine*. He was 81.



UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE ANIMATION GUILD

EVERY FRIDAY, Noon to 12:30 p.m.

TAG Office Hours via Zoom – Reserve your spot: RSVP@tag839.org

MAY

May 19th, 7 p.m. via Zoom Webinar

Negotiations Town Hall: How Do We Win?

Register ahead of time at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_75ow1iwHSYijeqzzkIGDOQ to save your spot and receive a meeting link.

May 25th

TAG Tuesday

Wear your TAG T-shirt and share your solidarity on social media while we work at a distance—there is strength in numbers!

May 25th, 7 p.m. via Zoom Webinar

Virtual General Membership Meeting

Register ahead of time to save your spot and receive a meeting link; watch your email account for details and instructions.

May 31st

Contract Holiday: Memorial Day

JUNE

June 29th

TAG Tuesday

Wear your TAG T-shirt and share your solidarity on social media while we work at a distance—there is strength in numbers!

Check the full TAG calendar, including special events and committee meetings, at: <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/calendar/>



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