Dear friends,

Thanks for your patience - over late summer vacations, Labor Day, and the Jewish holidays.

Thank you for your proposal of August 1, 2018. We appreciate your efforts to poll the respective NLG chapters in order to determine a narrower set of Articles over which the NLG management seeks to bargain. Upon review and discussion, however, the Union Bargaining Team feels that we are very far from a possible agreement.

Management’s proposal seeks to create a side agreement that would have overarching effects upon NLG staff, with negative impacts upon the rights, benefits, and working conditions that NLG workers have enjoyed--and that the NLG has upheld--for over 30 years. We feel that the management team’s proposal does not do justice to the NLG’s historic role in the U.S. labor movement, and in creating a just and humane workplace.

In our view, management’s proposal strips all meaning and purpose of the intent of "collective bargaining." It does so by empowering local chapters and national projects to make their own autonomous decisions about worker rights. We have serious concern that this proposal would eventually render the Union relatively meaningless for NLG staffers, since each office would be free to make its own decisions about issues critical to worker rights and responsibilities. This is a “divide and conquer” type strategy that would reduce Union worker rights and weaken NLG collective bargaining – not something we believe the NLG should aspire to do.

We strenuously object to many of proposed changes, including but not limited to:

- Entitling Chapter/Project Boards to decide whether an Executive Director or staff person be excluded from the union, using the same laws and legal interpretations relied upon by corporations and the right wing to bust unions and curtail worker rights;
- Eliminating the ability of most Chapter/Project staff to earn compensatory time, unless they first work the equivalent of 5 consecutive 10-hour days; and capping comp time at 70 hours annually, or 1.3 hours per week;
- Entitling Chapter/Project Boards to use evaluations as disciplinary actions, thereby weakening the requirements of progressive discipline.
- Eliminating the Union’s ability to arbitrate changes in working conditions
- Entitling Chapter/Project boards to impose burdensome fractional hour timekeeping requirements

At this point in our negotiations, we don't feel another conference call would be fruitful. Instead, we propose an in-person meeting (ideally in New York or Boston, since most of our bargaining team members reside there) prior to the convention in Portland, OR, if possible. We also propose that subsequent bargaining conversations include a skilled facilitator: someone who can both moderate our discussion, as well as provide guidance on how to move through difficult conversations to productive outcomes.

After many months of meetings, we unfortunately do not feel we are getting closer to “yes.” Rather, we remain in entrenched camps at odds with one another. We are open to your suggestions for how to schedule such a meeting, so that we can all get back to our work of fighting for a just and equal society.
In the interim, the Union intends to share the management team’s proposals and our response with our members, as well as with the Chapter/Project boards. We feel it is important that NLG members know what is being negotiated, and what is at stake for the NLG and its staff.

Sincerely yours,

Union Bargaining Team, on behalf of NLG union
Urszula Masny-Latos (MA Chapter)
Susan Howard (NY Chapter)
Pamela Goldstein (NIPNLG)