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August 8, 2018

Jacob Weisberg
Chairman and Editor-in-chief
The Slate Group
15 MetroTech Center, 8th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

We are writing in support of the Slate Union and their efforts to secure a fair employment contract. The Authors Guild, founded in 1912, protects the rights of authors and fights for living wages for working writers. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues at Slate and writers elsewhere who are employed in the digital media publishing industry. These journalists play a crucial role today in the creation and delivery of reliable, robust, and balanced reporting at a time when it is most needed.

As you know, this is an especially precarious time for all writers. The transition from traditional publishing platforms to digital has cut writers' income and reduced employment opportunities across the board. Traditional newsrooms are rapidly disappearing: the number of people reporting on the news is half of what it was four decades ago.¹ As more and more people turn to digital media, the task of providing content that is properly vetted, fact-checked, and balanced has fallen on the shoulders of writers in digital media.

We believe that collective bargaining agreements give writers employed in digital media a fair chance to create secure, equitable, and diverse workplace conditions that will benefit the industry as a whole. Writers should be able to work without fear of arbitrary layoffs, pay cuts, and loss of health insurance, and they should be fairly compensated. They should have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and their work. As last year's abrupt shutdown of Gothamist and DNAinfo illustrates, without the hard-won protections and safeguards that exist for writers working in more traditional media, the livelihoods of writers in digital media are vulnerable to "bottom lines" and unpredictable market forces. This threat to writers' livelihoods in turn threatens the integrity of our discourse, which we cannot afford to compromise.

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/new-media.pdf>

We appreciate that online and other news publishers may be struggling in this environment, but writers should not be forced to bear the brunt. We understand that Slate's management has been negotiating with its employees for close to a year, and we hope that it will make ratifying the union's very reasonable proposal a priority.

On behalf of the approximately 10,000 members of the Authors Guild, we thank you for taking the time to read our letter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Gleick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" and "G".

James Gleick
President
The Authors Guild

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary E. Rasenberger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" and "R".

Mary Rasenberger
Executive Director
The Authors Guild