



**SAG-AFTRA.**

# **WORK IN COMMERCIALS?**

**#ADS GO  
UNION**



My Fellow Actor,

You have chosen a career that is rewarding, challenging and essential to our cultural identity. SAG-AFTRA membership can be an important step toward achieving your artistic and professional goals.

SAG-AFTRA is the largest union for performers in the world, representing and protecting 160,000 media professionals. Collectively, we secure vital protections, negotiate and enforce fair contracts, and provide crucial benefits for media artists. The SAG-AFTRA Foundation steps in with critical support when our members most need it, in times of personal hardship, unexpected career adjustments, and industry-wide challenges.

To be a performer demands enormous commitment, not only to your craft but also to our creative community. Every talented professional who accepts a non-union job undercuts everything previous generations worked so hard to establish in this industry. Good wages, residuals, workplace standards and safety, and pension and health benefits all depend on our community's ability to stand united and strong.

I encourage you to join us. Become a member of SAG-AFTRA and benefit from the protection and power that comes from being part of a community of 160,000.

We are all safer and stronger together.

In unity,  
Gabrielle Carteris

President  
Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television & Radio Artists

# AM I READY TO JOIN?

If you're thinking about joining SAG-AFTRA, but wondering if the time is right, ask yourself these questions:

**AM I SERIOUS ABOUT HAVING A LONG, SUCCESSFUL ACTING CAREER?**

**DO I WANT TO BE SEEN AS A PROFESSIONAL?**

**DO I WANT ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE?**

**DO I WANT EXPERT ASSISTANCE IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?**

**DO I WANT TO BE PAID FAIRLY FOR MY TALENT AND MY WORK?**

**DO I WANT TO BE SAFE AT MY WORKPLACE?**

You may have heard some things that are causing you to hesitate, but there are lots of good reasons to join. To check if you're eligible, visit [sagaftra.org/howtojoin](https://sagaftra.org/howtojoin).

There are a lot of myths out there, so it's important to

**GET THE FACTS!**

**READ ON TO LEARN MORE.**



# MYTHS YOU **MAY** HAVE HEARD?

## **MYTH: EVERYTHING IS GOING NON-UNION!**

**TRUTH: PERFORMERS MAKE ALMOST A BILLION (WITH A 'B') DOLLARS WORKING ON UNION COMMERCIALS EVERY YEAR.**

In recent years, there has been an increase in non-union commercial work, but there are a whole lot of union commercials being made. More of our members work under the Commercials Contracts than any other SAG-AFTRA contract. If someone tells you to stay non-union because of all the non-union “opportunities,” you might want to think about what they get out of you staying non-union.

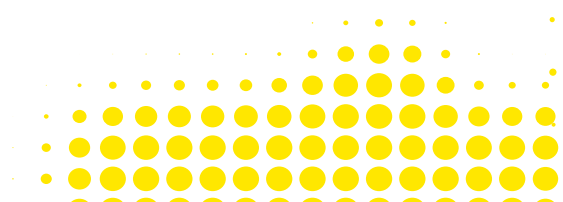
## **MYTH: ALL EXPOSURE IS GOOD EXPOSURE.**

**TRUTH: SOME EXPOSURE CAN BE VERY, VERY BAD EXPOSURE.**

Exposure can be your best friend or your worst enemy. For film and TV work, the more, the better! But when it comes to the commercial world, overexposure can damage your career because advertisers won't hire performers associated with competitive products. That's why union contracts come with protections and residuals. You get regular payments for not working on competitive brands, and union ads have a maximum period of use. If an advertiser wants to use your spot beyond that maximum period of use, you have the right to renegotiate your fee or even refuse to let them continue to use your performance.

There are no protections when you do non-union commercials. They can run forever and cause you to have uncontrollable product conflicts that box you out of more lucrative union commercial opportunities. “In perpetuity” can handcuff you to a brand forever: Do one non-union beer commercial and it could run forever without further payment, and you'll never do a union commercial for any beverage. Ever. The best commercial agents are generally reluctant to represent actors who have a bunch of uncontrolled conflicts because their future commercial opportunities are limited.

Working on a non-union spot might put a few bucks in your pocket right now, but you could sacrifice a lot of union work for the rest of your career.



## **MYTH: THERE ISN'T MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORKING ON NON-UNION AND UNION COMMERCIALS.**

## **TRUTH: WORKING ON UNION COMMERCIALS IS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM WORKING ON NON-UNION ADS.**

- **UNION COMMERCIALS PAY RESIDUALS**, which means you get regular payments for your exposure for as long as your commercial is airing. Residuals account for most of the earnings in union commercials, and they can add up to a very nice chunk of change. *Non-union commercials don't pay residuals.*
- When you work under a SAG-AFTRA contract, the producer has to contribute money to **YOUR PENSION AND HEALTH PLAN**, in addition to your wages and residuals. With union commercials, you have the opportunity to qualify for fantastic health insurance and build a pension for when you retire (yes, someday you will be old enough to retire). *With non-union ads, you get zero benefits.*
- **SAFETY** is a top priority of SAG-AFTRA, whether it's ensuring proper protections and protocol when you're doing a stunt or making sure your working conditions aren't hazardous. The union will always have your back. Non-union sets can often be *dangerous* and in remote locations, with no one to call if things go sideways.
- On a union set, you're guaranteed **MEAL BREAKS AND FOOD** to eat during those breaks. On a non-union set, you may work very long hours with *no breaks* at all.
- SAG-AFTRA contracts set **STANDARDS OF PAY AND PROTECTIONS** that enable our members to make the performing arts a viable career. Non-union rates range from "exposure and a sandwich" to a few thousand dollars and are almost always *far below union rates*.

# **SALLY'S UNION CAREER**

**VS.**

# **SALLY'S NON-UNION CAREER**

**MEET SALLY.**

**SALLY IS A PERFORMER.**

**SALLY IS 22 AND JUST GOT HER  
FIRST GIG IN A UNION COMMERCIAL.**

**SALLY IS NOW ELIGIBLE TO JOIN SAG-AFTRA  
BUT DOESN'T KNOW IF SHE SHOULD.**

**LET'S SEE WHAT SALLY'S LIFE MIGHT BE LIKE  
AS A UNION VS. NON-UNION PERFORMER.**





## UNION SALLY



YEAR  
1

**SALLY SHOOTS ONE SPOT THAT RUNS ON CABLE TV AND THREE DIGITAL SPOTS, EARNING \$27,000 AND QUALIFYING FOR SAG-AFTRA HEALTH INSURANCE.**

## NON-UNION SALLY



**SALLY SHOOTS THREE SPOTS THAT RUN ON TV AND ON THE INTERNET, EARNING \$7,500.**

YEAR  
2

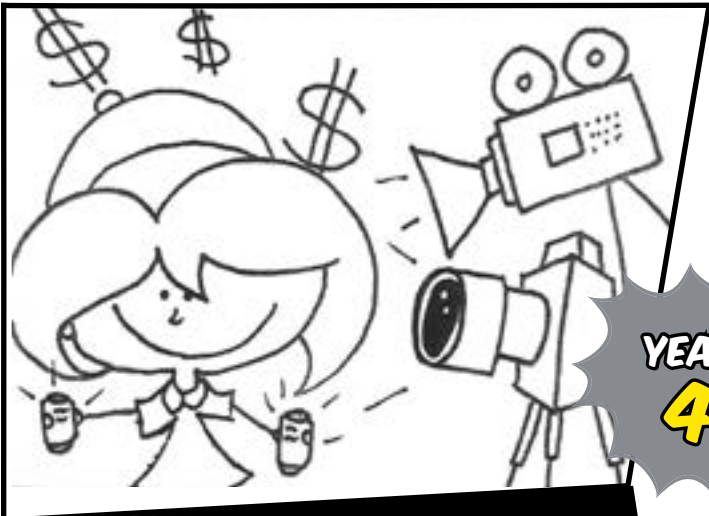


**SALLY LANDS A TOP-NOTCH AGENT. SHE BOOKS ONE NATIONAL TV SPOT, ONE CABLE SPOT, AND THREE DIGITAL SPOTS, AND GETS HER FIRST GUEST ROLE ON A TV SERIES. SHE MAKES \$58,000.**



**SALLY SHOOTS FIVE SPOTS THAT RUN ON ALL PLATFORMS AND TWO DIGITAL SPOTS. HER MANAGER TELLS HER SHE DOESN'T NEED TO JOIN SAG-AFTRA BECAUSE SHE'S WORKING SO MUCH, BUT SHE ONLY MAKES \$18,000.**

## UNION SALLY



YEAR  
4

ONE OF SALLY'S COMMERCIALS IS SO POPULAR THAT AFTER 21 MONTHS, HER AGENT IS ABLE TO RENEGOTIATE FOR MORE MONEY AND SALLY HAS HER BEST YEAR YET, EARNING \$94,000.

## NON-UNION SALLY



ONE OF SALLY'S COMMERCIALS IS SO POPULAR THAT IT RUNS CONSTANTLY FOR YEARS, BUT SALLY SIGNED A CONTRACT FOR USE "IN PERPETUITY," SO SHE NEVER MAKES MORE THAN THE \$2,500 SHE GOT PAID WHEN SHE SHOT IT.



YEAR  
8

SALLY BOOKS TWO NATIONAL TV SPOTS, FOUR DIGITAL SPOTS AND IS IN A MOVIE! SHE GETS INTO A FENDER-BENDER ON THE WAY TO AN AUDITION AND HAS SOME MINOR INJURIES, BUT HER SAG-AFTRA HEALTH INSURANCE HAS HER COVERED.



SALLY IS HAVING TROUBLE GETTING AUDITIONS BECAUSE SHE HAS UNCONTROLLABLE CONFLICTS FROM NON-UNION SPOTS SHE SHOT YEARS AGO. SHE GETS INTO A FENDER-BENDER AND ENDS UP WITH A HUGE HOSPITAL BILL.



## UNION SALLY



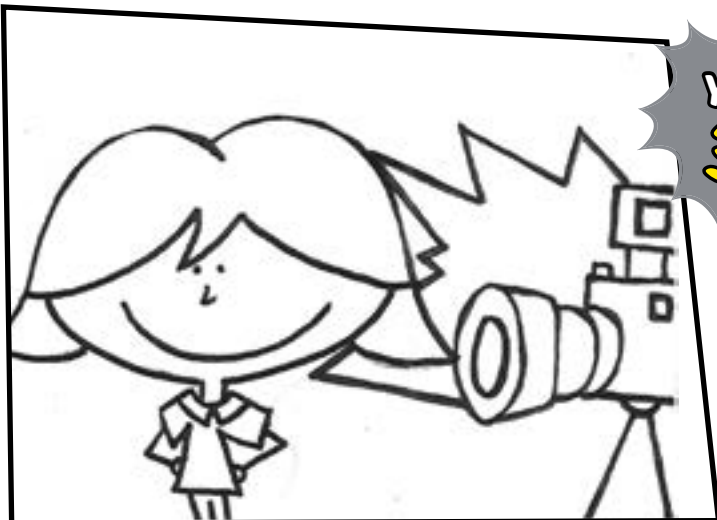
**SALLY IS MAKING ENOUGH MONEY FROM HER UNION JOBS AND RESIDUALS TO BUY HER FIRST HOME.**

## NON-UNION SALLY



**YEAR 15**

**SALLY BOOKS A FEW INTERNET SPOTS, BUT IS STILL STRUGGLING TO PAY HER RENT. SHE TRIES TO GET BETTER REPRESENTATION, BUT AGENTS WON'T SIGN HER BECAUSE OF HER "IN PERPETUITY" CONFLICTS.**



**SALLY IS STILL WORKING, BUT NOT QUITE AS MUCH AS WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER. SHE'S HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO TAKE HER GREAT SAG-AFTRA PENSION, AND IS LIVING A VERY COMFORTABLE LIFE.**

**YEAR 35**



**SALLY WASN'T ABLE TO SUSTAIN AN ACTING CAREER WITH NON-UNION WAGES AND NO BENEFITS. SHE HAD TO MOVE ON TO ANOTHER PROFESSION 15 YEARS AGO.**

# WHAT KIND OF CAREER DO YOU WANT TO HAVE?

# THERE'S MORE!

You may not be aware of all the advantages of SAG-AFTRA membership.

Here are some of the benefits we haven't touched on, yet:

## COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

SAG-AFTRA lobbies on issues that impact your life, such as artists' rights, digital theft, runaway production, and more.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

From workshops to classes with casting directors, the union and its partners provide a wealth of educational and professional services.

## MOVIE NIGHT

Every year, members receive screeners for all of the SAG Awards nominated movies, and vote for the honorees.

## PROFESSIONAL STATUS

With a SAG-AFTRA card, producers, casting directors and directors know you are a true professional. Top talent agents and managers prefer to represent SAG-AFTRA members.

## CONTROLLING YOUR DESTINY

As a member, you can help shape your future by participating in the decision-making process at local and national levels of the union.

**GET INVOLVED!**

## CONTACT US!

Go to [sagaftra.org](http://sagaftra.org) for more info on what you get when you join SAG-AFTRA.

Email your questions to [AdsGoUnion@sagaftra.org](mailto:AdsGoUnion@sagaftra.org) or call **(877) 280-6705**.

# READY TO JOIN?

A performer becomes eligible for SAG-AFTRA membership through SAG-AFTRA employment or employment under an affiliated performers' union.

Here's what you need to qualify:

1. **Proof of employment under a SAG-AFTRA, SAG or AFTRA contract.**  
Become eligible by doing one principal job or completing three days of work as a background actor under a SAG-AFTRA collective bargaining agreement.
2. **Proof of employment under an affiliated performers' union.**  
You can join SAG-AFTRA if you have been a paid-up member of an affiliated performers' union (ACTRA, AEA, AGMA or AGVA) for a period of one year and have worked and been paid at least once as a principal performer in that affiliated union's jurisdiction.

**GET MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT JOINING HERE:**

**SAGAFTRA.ORG/HOWTOJOIN  
OR CALL (323) 549-6769.**



## ABOUT US



**SAG-AFTRA®**

SAG-AFTRA represents approximately 160,000 actors, announcers, broadcast journalists, dancers, DJs, news writers, news editors, program hosts, puppeteers, recording artists, singers, stunt performers, voiceover artists and other media professionals. SAG-AFTRA members are the faces and voices that entertain and inform America and the world. With national offices in Los Angeles and New York, and local offices nationwide, SAG-AFTRA members work together to secure the strongest protections for media artists into the 21st century and beyond.



**SAG-AFTRA**

5757 Wilshire Blvd., 7th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90036-3600

[sagaftra.org](http://sagaftra.org)    

