



Dear Colleagues:

We did it. In response to the overwhelming strength of our newsrooms, Tronc agreed this weekend to voluntarily recognize the Chicago Tribune Guild, which will represent the Chicago Tribune, The Beacon-News, Daily Southtown, Elgin Courier-News, Hoy, Naperville Sun, RedEye and the Design and Production Studio (DPS). As a formality, we expect official union certification from the National Labor Relations Board in the coming week.

Most importantly, with this agreement we all gain the legal protections of recognition.

This is an extraordinary development that has evolved quickly. Our attorneys and partners at The News-Guild-Communications Workers of America tell us that in decades of organizing, they have never seen a newsroom earn voluntary recognition from a company of this size and with such a long history of anti-union bias. Tronc undoubtedly realized it would waste time and money during an election process it would lose.

We achieved this together. More than 85 percent of our newsrooms — reporters, editors, designers, photographers, columnists and other colleagues — signed cards saying we wanted our interests represented by a union. We agreed that, in the face of pernicious corporate influence on our industry, we need a better way to advocate for our work, protect the future of our and the next generation's journalism careers and strengthen our coverage of Chicago and its suburban communities. We also know this is only the first step.

We will have three bargaining units that work together: One will comprise Tribune and RedEye; one will comprise Beacon-News, Southtown, Courier-News, Naperville Sun and Hoy; and one will comprise DPS. We agreed to three units because we believe it puts us in a strong position, immediately, to fight for all of us.

The company has agreed to bargain jointly with the Tribune/RedEye and suburban/Hoy units, meaning representatives from each of those four entities have the right to negotiate at the same time at the same table. DPS will bargain separately, but with full, coordinated support of the other two units.

Three bargaining units, one union. We will maintain our solidarity at the bargaining table and in our newsrooms.

We are now in a “status quo” period, which means that Tronc cannot unilaterally alter any work conditions without first negotiating with our bargaining units. With voluntary recognition, all of us — the Guild and Tronc — can remain focused on providing the high-quality journalism for which we are known.

In the coming weeks, members of the organizing committee will work with our Guild representatives and lawyers to map out bargaining strategies, including surveys asking you to identify contract priorities. The Guild and Tronc have agreed to negotiate in good faith as to which of our newsroom colleagues will have Guild representation. We maintain our position that union protections should extend to the majority of our source editors and editorial board members. Tronc currently disagrees.

We expect to resolve these issues and achieve three fair contracts. Our newsrooms have worked together extensively, sharing bylines, awards, values, a code of ethics and much more. That same unity has now helped us achieve critical goals in this process — legal protections and a seat at the bargaining table — and it will continue to serve us in negotiations.

The Guild will stay in touch as we move forward. In the meantime, we welcome you to bring us your questions and concerns. Join us at The Billy Goat after work Monday, when we'll lift a glass in appreciation of what we've accomplished so quickly and start looking toward the future.

We did it. We have a union.

In solidarity and with resolve,

The Chicago Tribune Guild organizing committee.