

CALIFORNIA

Dancers at this California topless bar to become only unionized strippers in U.S.



Reagan, left, a dancer at Star Garden, protests outside the North Hollywood strip club in March 2022. After a 15-month battle, the club's strippers will become the only ones in the U.S. to gain union recognition. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)



By Noah Goldberg
Staff Writer | [X Follow](#)

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Dancers at a North Hollywood topless bar will become the only strippers in the United States to gain union recognition after the club's management withdrew challenges to their guild election, the union announced Tuesday.

The recognition came after a sometimes testy 15-month battle between the dancers and the strip club, [Star Garden](#), over becoming a union.

"If you have been following our journey, then you know this has been a long, exhausting fight, which is why this victory is so sweet," said Reagan, one of the Star Garden dancers. "We put everything we have into this campaign, and we were fortunate to have the support and solidarity from the club's patrons, our allies and friends, the labor movement, and our union, Actors' Equity Assn."

Recognition came during a settlement hearing between union attorneys and attorneys for management at the bar. The National Labor Relations Board will count the votes on Thursday. There are 19 dancers eligible to join the union.



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Lawyers representing the club withdrew their challenges to the union election and agreed to recognize the union.

"Star Garden is committed to negotiating in good faith with Actors' Equity a first of its kind collective bargaining agreement which is fair to all parties," said An Ruda, a lawyer for management at Star Garden. Ruda also represents management at the Los Angeles Times in union contract negotiations.

The strippers join the ranks of the Actors' Equity Assn., becoming the first strip dancers in the union of more than 51,000 actors and stage managers.

"This is not just a win for the dancers at this club, but the entire strip club industry," said Lilith, a Star Garden dancer. "[Strippers who want to unionize](#) their workplaces

and have a voice in the way their clubs are run now have a clear path forward.”



CALIFORNIA

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Star Garden is expected to become the first unionized strip club in the country since 1996, when [strippers formed the Exotic Dancers Union](#) at the Lusty Lady Peepshow in San Francisco with the Service Employees International Union. Lusty Lady closed in 2013.

Tensions between the dancers and management at Star Garden sometimes escalated during the negotiations over unionization, with [dancers signing on a petition](#) to management in March.

Fifteen dancers signed the letter, which demanded better working conditions.

“We demand to be treated with basic dignity and respect,” the petition said.



CALIFORNIA

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Strippers began picketing outside the establishment in 2022, telling patrons not to enter and that the conditions inside were unsafe to dancers. They also informed people outside that [dancers were unjustly fired](#).

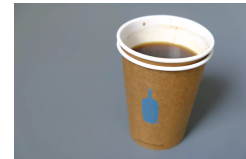
Eight strippers told The Times in interviews that management told security not to interfere with threatening customers.

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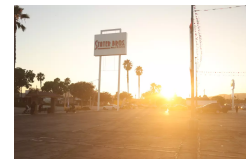
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Noah Goldberg covers Los Angeles City Hall for the Los Angeles Times. He previously worked on its breaking news team and has also written an array of offbeat enterprise stories. Before joining The Times in 2022, Goldberg worked in New York City as the Brooklyn courts reporter for the New York Daily News and as the criminal justice reporter for the Brooklyn Eagle. He graduated from Vassar College.