

CHANGING LIVES

#UNIONSTRONG

FACT SHEET SUPREME COURT THREATENS WORKERS' RIGHTS

Background

The Labor Movement built the American middle class. When workers stand together, we are powerful enough to demand fair wages and safe worksites. Not only do unions reduce economic inequality, but they change lives.

The union movement stands for the basic principle that the best way for workers to get a fair wage and safe working conditions is to stand together and engage in collective action. Union members earn 27 percent more than nonunion members. This “union advantage”—more money in union members’ paychecks—exists in almost every occupation, from service and factory workers to clerical and professional employees.

When union density is high, wages rise for all workers. The union difference is even stronger for women and people of color who earn significantly more with a union. A union contract also establishes fair wage rates for all, helping to close the wage gap and alleviate discriminatory pay practices.

Unions fight for worker safety measures and union worksites are safer. Workers with a union are more likely to have employer provided health care coverage, paid sick days, and retirement security.

That’s why corporations and wealthy donors want to weaken unions. For years, they have used state legislatures and the courts to attack working people, make it harder to organize, and silence worker voices. Today, unions face the likelihood that the entire public sector will go “right to work” when the U.S. Supreme Court decides *Janus v. AFSCME* later this term.

The corporate CEOs rigging the rules of our economy want to silence us. They want to take away our freedom to negotiate a fair wage, decent benefits like health care and retirement security, and safe working conditions just so they can demand even bigger bonuses for themselves.

What is *Janus v. AFSCME*?

Janus v. AFSCME is a case to rig the system even further against working people while widening income inequality and lining the pockets of wealthy CEOs. The case seeks to weaken unions by eliminating unions’ ability to collect “fair share” fees from those who benefit from a collective bargaining agreement but choose not to be members of the union.

Under current law, no one is forced to join a union or pay a penny toward the union’s political work on behalf of its members. What this case is really about is crippling unions so that we can’t continue to be a powerful counterbalance to corporate greed and power. The case is the culmination of decades of attacks on working people by corporate CEOs, billionaires, and the politicians whose campaigns they bankroll.

The immensely wealthy funders of this case, including the Koch Brothers, use their power to make it difficult for working people to have a fair shot at the American Dream. The backers of this case are the same deep-pocketed funders behind efforts to limit voting rights, attack immigrants, and undermine civil rights protections. These greedy CEOs and special interests don’t want working people to have a seat at the table to negotiate a fair deal in exchange for a hard day’s work or fight for progressive policy that benefits everyone.

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How Will This Decision Impact California?

If the Court decision in Janus turns, it effectively weakens public sector unions, wages will go down as workers lose bargaining power. In so-called "right to work" states, workers earn less money, there are more workplace injuries, and the poverty rate goes up.

Not just for union workers, but all workers. With working people under attack, unions and allies must vigorously defend the basic rights these CEOs and billionaires are attempting to gut. That means organizing at the workplace, publicly support the good work unions do on behalf of all workers, and enacting laws in California that strengthen workers' freedom to form and join unions and exercise their rights at work.

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