

## Supreme Court Case Threatens Public Workers

### Talking Points on *Janus v. AFSCME*

**This case is a purely political scheme to further rig the economy against working people by striking down the freedom of working people to come together in strong unions.**

- The Supreme Court case aims to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions to speak up for themselves, their families and their communities.
- Unions have played a critical role in building and protecting the working class in America. They help hardworking people build a good life.
- The corporate interests behind this case simply do not believe that working people should have the same rights CEOs have: the freedom to negotiate a fair return on our work so we can provide for ourselves and our families.
- This case is a blatant attempt to strip working people of our political power. A recent article in The Guardian highlights how this case is part of a blatant multi-million dollar campaign to “defund and defang” and weaken labor unions.

**Strong unions are vital to unrigging this economy because they improve all communities and the lives of union and non-union members alike.**

- Unions raise wages for both union and non-union workers.
- Unions are more important than ever – and Americans know it. New Gallup research shows that more than 3 in 5 Americans have a favorable view of labor unions. That’s the highest level in 15 years – and support is even stronger among younger people.
- When union membership is high, entire communities enjoy wages that represent a fair return on their work and greater social and economic mobility. Unions use our collective voice to advocate for policies that benefit all working people – like increases to the minimum wage, affordable health care, and great public schools.
- Unions provide a path to the middle class for working people by increasing their income and creating economic security for their families. As union membership has decreased, income inequality has risen in the United States. Source: Economic Policy Institute: How unions help today’s workers.
- Through collective bargaining, members of strong unions are scoring victories that help entire communities – like safer nurse-staffing levels that help patients and smaller class sizes that help students.

**Strong unions advocate for equal opportunity for women and communities of color who have been systematically disadvantaged due to discrimination and prejudice.**

- Today's rigged economy disproportionately hurts women and people of color. Unions can help them gain their fair share of the wealth they create.
- Those of us in the labor movement and the civil rights community know that economic justice and civil rights are inextricably linked. One cannot be achieved without the other.
- It's shameful that Minnesota is the second worst state in America for racial inequality, according to a new report by 24/7 Wall Street. The unemployment rate for black Minnesotans is 8.8 percent, but only 3 percent for white Minnesotans. The homeownership rate for black people is 21.7 percent; that number more than triples for white people at 76 percent. If you don't have a job or a home, how can you get ahead?
- Across the nation, more than half of African-American workers and nearly 60 percent of Latinx workers are paid less than \$15 an hour. Source.
- Union jobs continue to be a path to the middle class for people of color, who often face low wages in their professions. Black union members today earn 14.7 percent more than their non-union counterparts. Source.
- When Latinx are members of a union, their median weekly income increases by more than 38 percent and they are 41 percent more likely to have employer-provided health insurance. Source.
- Minnesota unions negotiated equal pay for women who work in the public sector. Today, those women earn a dollar for every dollar a man makes. Meanwhile, most non-union women still earn only 78 cents for every dollar a man makes for comparable work. Source.

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### Background on *Janus v. AFSCME*

The U.S. Supreme Court will take up a case this term called *Janus v. AFSCME*. The case would make the entire public sector “right-to-work” in one fell swoop.

*Janus* is the culmination of decades of attacks on working people by corporations and the wealthy – and the politicians who do their bidding – to rig the economy in their favor. The forces behind this case are the same forces that have pushed to limit voting rights, undermine civil rights, and attack immigrants.

Their goal with *Janus* is no secret. They want to use the Supreme Court to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions, because unions give workers power in numbers to speak up for themselves, their families and their communities. Unions help hardworking people build a good life with economic stability for their families.

A recent article in The Guardian highlights how this case is part of a blatant multi-million dollar campaign to “defund and defang” and weaken labor unions because they know that labor unions are the best vehicle working people have to level the economic playing field for all Americans.

The Liberty Justice Center, the legal arm of the right-wing Illinois Policy Institute, is arguing on behalf of Illinois state employee Mark Janus, the primary plaintiff. They argue that state employees should not be forced to pay union dues.

Lawyers for AFSCME Council 31 insist these “fair share” dues only go towards funding collective bargaining efforts and do not subsidize other political activities.

The case was heard by the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals on March 1, 2017 and was granted certiorari by the U.S. Supreme Court on September 28, 2017. A possible ruling is expected sometime between April and June 2018.