



January 2018

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Janus v. AFSCME is a case before the U.S. Supreme Court backed by corporate CEOs and billionaires who are trying to weaken public-sector unions. The lead plaintiff in the case is Mark Janus, an Illinois social worker who doesn't want to pay any union dues or fees. A decision in his favor — and against the interests of unionized working men and women — is expected as early as June.

Why are we worried about *Janus* now?

Even though the outcome of this case may be months away, we need to be prepared for both an immediate and a prolonged fight to protect our rights. There are already 28 states where legislatures have passed so-called Right-to-Work laws in an attempt to weaken unions. The *Janus* case is part of a larger corporate-backed campaign to undo union power across the country, but we can use it as an opportunity to not only maintain but also grow our union power.

What is the current law?

No one is required to join a union. However, under the current system based on a 40-year-old Supreme Court decision, all public employees who are members of a collective bargaining unit can be required to pay a fair-share fee (also known as an agency fee) toward the cost of negotiating and maintaining the contract from which all employees benefit.

How would unions be affected by overturning current law?

If *Janus* prevails, “free riders” would be allowed to receive all the collective bargaining rights afforded to dues-paying members without having to pay a dime toward negotiating and maintaining the contract under which they work. If fair-share fees are prohibited, union members will be targeted by campaigns urging them to become free riders. But those campaigns will not mention that unions can be decertified, ending collective bargaining, if membership drops significantly.

What is the goal of *Janus* backers?

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and other corporate-funded groups behind this lawsuit want management to have unfettered rights to determine pay, benefits and working conditions. We know from experience that weakening unions leads to lower compensation. For example, since public employee unions were gutted in Wisconsin in 2011, median pay and benefits for teachers has declined by \$10,842. Weakening unions also impairs the ability of employees to have a say over the conditions under which they work.

What is the MTA doing in response to *Janus*?

The MTA is fighting back by organizing to protect the power of our members and the public good. This includes hiring additional organizers to work with local association leaders on developing plans to engage members and encourage them to be active at the local, state and national levels in support of the public schools and colleges our students, our members and our communities deserve.

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