

## Unions Fight for Workers, Let's Fight for Unions

By Brittany Alston

As February comes to an end, public sector unions—those representing workers employed by the government—are preparing for the Supreme Court's decision on *Janus v American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31*. This Saturday, February 24th at 10am, DC Jobs with Justice and allies will be standing in solidarity with all workers and supporting their right to organize and fight for justice at the [Working People's Day of Action](#).

*Janus v AFSCME* will decide the fate of agency fees in 22 states around the country. Mark Janus, an Illinois state employee, no longer wants to pay dues to AFSCME, the union that collectively bargains on his behalf. Currently, nonmember workers like Janus pay “fair share” or agency fees to the union. Because unions represent all workers, agency fees ensure that workers who have opted out of membership, but benefit from collective bargaining activities, still contribute to union expenses. The elimination of agency fees would create a free rider dilemma by allowing some workers to benefit from the union's efforts, without paying their fair share.



As of now, agency fees are considered legal. If the Supreme Court rules against AFSCME, public sector workers would be forced to do the same amount of work with far fewer resources.<sup>1</sup>

The case impacts approximately 5.5 million government workers in states that allow workers to collectively bargain. In DC alone, there are approximately 26,000 unionized public-sector workers employed by the District. They are our police officers, our teachers and school staff, nurses, fire fighters and EMS workers.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, unionized workers in DC have higher wages as compared to nonunion workers in the same industry or occupation. One of DC's growing sectors, the food service sector, is often described as low-wage work. However, unionized food service workers make approximately 35% more than their nonunion counterparts, on average. A unionized food service worker takes home approximately \$21.20 per hour, compared to a nonunion worker making \$13.70 per hour.<sup>3</sup> The wage increase is the difference between a living wage and non-living wage job.

The Working People's Day of Action is a day to stand with workers who are fighting for a better quality of life for families and communities in the District and throughout the country.

On Saturday, February 24th, 2018 at 10am, join DC Jobs with Justice and allies at the Working People's Day of Action at Freedom Plaza! [Click here to RSVP](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Marvit, Moshe (2018). “The Legal Arguments of Janus v. AFSCME Explained”, The Century Foundation.

<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/legal-arguments-janus-v-afscme-explained/>

<sup>2</sup> Office of the City Administrator. <https://oca.dc.gov/page/bargaining-unit-employees-and-union-representatives-0>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Employment Services (2016). Labor Market Research & Information; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Modeled Wage Estimates.