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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Supreme Court Ruling in *Janus* a Blow to Working Families

Wealthy interests behind attacks on unions, public schools

The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Janus v. American Federation of County, State Municipal Employees, Council 31* will make it even harder for working people to come together and speak up for each other, say officials with the 3-million member National Education Association (NEA) and its Virginia affiliate. The Court's 5-4 decision, announced this morning, prohibits public employee unions from collecting "fair share" fees from nonmembers as payment for non-political bargaining and representation services.

Although state law forbids Virginia public employees from bargaining collectively, Virginia Education Association (VEA) president Jim Livingston said all teachers—and all citizens—stand to lose from a case aimed at weakening the power of education groups to advocate for students in public schools.

"As a longtime classroom teacher, I know what my students need to succeed, and unions have always helped educators advocate for smaller class sizes, safer schools, and better learning environments for all students," said Livingston, a middle school math teacher from Prince William County. "These attacks on unions are nothing more than an attempt by special interests to further rig the system against working people, to the detriment of our students and communities."

NEA, at more than 3 million members the nation's largest union, filed an amicus brief in the case with the American Association of University Professors to expose the truly radical nature of the plaintiff's arguments, including their legally unsupported claim that public-sector collective bargaining itself is constitutionally suspect.

The case relies on a failed premise and logic as no employee can be forced to join a union. In fact, if law, merit and precedent had mattered, all nine Supreme Court justices would have ruled in favor of working people in the *Janus* case — just as they did more than 40 years ago when they found state and local governments’ system of ordering their labor relations to be constitutional.

“This case isn’t about what’s good for our students or working families,” said Livingston. “It’s about making it harder for working people to get ahead, making it harder for us to stand together and fight for our students, our schools, our paychecks, and our benefits. And that makes our path, and our students’ and their families’ path, to middle class that much more out of reach.”

“Many of our schools have faced serious funding cuts that are likely to grow even worse,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “We’ve seen it in the resources available to our students, and we have felt it in our paychecks. All over the country, they are cutting funding for arts and physical education, up-to-date textbooks, recess, and class sizes that allow for one-on-one instruction. A strong union and collective bargaining agreements are what help to ensure students receive the tools and resources they need to succeed in school and in life.”

For more information about the case, including links to friend of the court briefs, columns by experts opposing the deceptive lawsuit, and other data, go to www.neatoday.org/janus.

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The Virginia Education Association represents nearly 50,000 teachers, school support professionals, and others committed to creating great public schools for every child.

Learn more at www.veanea.org or @VEA4Kids (Keep up with the conversation on Twitter at #UnRigTheSystem and #ItsAboutFreedom)