Statement on the Janus v AFSCME Supreme Court Decision

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I grew up in a union family. I knew the words to “Solidarity Forever” before I knew my ABCs, and I have been walking precincts and picket lines since pre-school. It was because of my Dad’s union membership that my family had a roof over our heads, that we could seek medical care when we needed it, and that my Dad and his co-workers had a voice on the job to ensure a healthy and safe work environment and to negotiate contracts with fair pay, good benefits and retirement security.

In California, unions have partnered with progressive elected leaders to raise wages and reduce pay inequity, ensure all workers have paid sick days, enact paid family leave, strengthen workplace safety, and so much more. Benefits that serve all workers, not just those in unions. Union teachers bargain for smaller class sizes. Union nurses bargain for better patient care. Police officers, firefighters, EMS workers and 911 dispatchers bargain for more resources to keep the public safe. Through our apprenticeship programs, unions run the largest career training programs outside of the military. Through our partnerships with the United Way, we do community work like running food banks and food drives, helping to rebuild after disaster strikes, and expanding access to healthcare.

A core belief of the labor movement is that all work has dignity, all work deserves respect, and all workers deserve to be treated accordingly. The billionaire corporate elites behind the Janus v. AFSCME case do not share that belief, and they have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to divide and conquer working people. While we strongly condemn the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn 40 years’ worth of precedent by making fair share fees for public sector workers unconstitutional, no court decision can extinguish the desire of working people standing together in unions to create better lives for our families and communities. We are stronger than Janus.

As Martin Luther King said, “The labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it. By raising the living standards of millions, labor miraculously created a market for industry and lifted the whole nation to undreamed levels of production. Those who attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers them.”

Today, we commit to not only sustaining the labor movement, but building and strengthening it so more working people can negotiate a fair deal in return for their hard work. Despite this decision, our unions will continue to lead the fight for a balanced economy that gives everyone a fair shot at the American Dream.

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