

# THE JANUS JUNCTURE:

An Evaluation of Public-Sector Union  
Members' Responses to the U.S.  
Supreme Court Ruling

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# Executive Summary

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that government workers cannot be forced to pay fees to a labor union. Many experts described this ruling as the most significant court decision affecting collective bargaining rights in decades, and most agree that the ruling means public sector unions throughout the United States could lose millions of dollars in forced dues payments.

To better understand how state government employees view this ruling and whether they plan to continue or stop paying dues, a national survey of over 300 public-sector union members was administered in August 2018. The findings reveal some interesting and important insights about public sector union members.

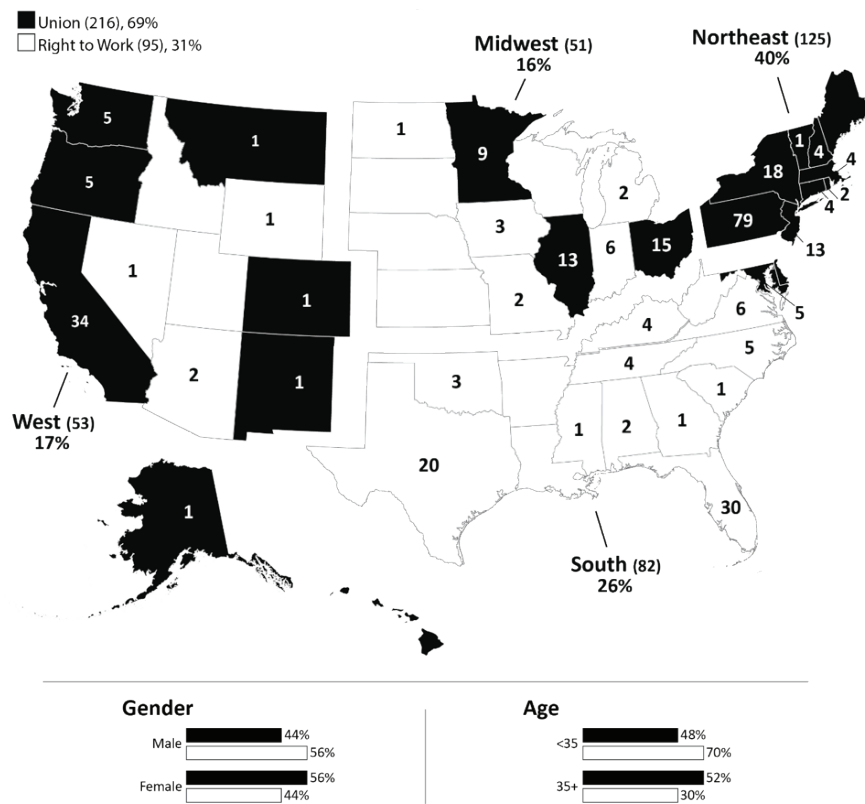
- **Awareness of the Supreme Court ruling is high.** While most (71%) are aware of the ruling, some are not (29%).
- **Many think the ruling is a positive development.** 51% say the changes are positive, but 32% do not and 17% are on the fence. When asked why they think the changes are positive (n=147), respondents offered a number of reasons, including that the ruling protects their personal rights and freedoms (37%), eliminates what they believe is an unfair labor practice (22%) and allows them to save money by not being forced to pay dues (18%).
- **Workers will exercise their new freedom to stop paying dues.** One-third plan to change what they are paying, with 6% saying they have already stopped paying dues and 25% saying they plan to stop paying.

## Methods

An online survey of 311 public-sector union members was conducted between August 6, 2018 and August 13, 2018. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of 311 employees who responded to this survey by state (Union and Right to Work; Region), gender and age. This survey has a margin of error of +/- 6%.

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and screened for union workplaces, including membership to public-sector unions. Each qualified respondent was paid \$4 for participating in this survey.

**Table 1**  
**Public-sector Union Member Respondent Profile**



## Awareness of U.S. Supreme Court Decision

At the time of the survey, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling was about two months old. Table 2 presents the awareness of this ruling among public-sector union members. Overall, three-in-five (71%) are aware of the ruling, while 29% say they are not.

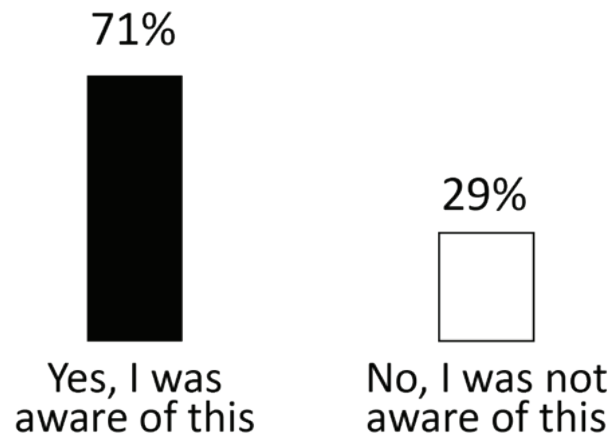
- Those with the greatest awareness are from the Northeast (76%) and Midwest (74%) regions, while fewer members from the South (65%) and West (68%) are aware.
- Similarly, members from union states (74%) are more likely to be aware of the ruling than are those from Right to Work states (64%).

## Table 2

### Awareness of U.S. Supreme Court Ruling (Janus v. AFSCME)

Are you aware of a recent US Supreme Court decision that says public sector employees no longer have to pay forced fees to their unions if they do not meet their personal needs?

Base: 311



## Opinion of U.S. Supreme Court Ruling

Table 3 shows that half (51%) of public sector union members think the change is positive, while 32% do not and 17% are unsure.

- Those who are more likely to say the change is positive include:
  - Those who have already stopped paying—or are planning to stop paying—dues (84%).
  - Members from Right to Work states (65%).
  - Individuals from the South (62%).
  - Those under 35 years old (61%).
- Those more likely to say the change is not a positive, include:
  - Those who plan to keep paying dues, even though they are not required (44%).
  - Those over 50 years old (41%).

### Table 3 Opinion of U.S. Supreme Court Ruling

Knowing this, do you believe it is a positive change that government workers in the United States now have a choice whether or not to support or pay money to a union?

Base: 311

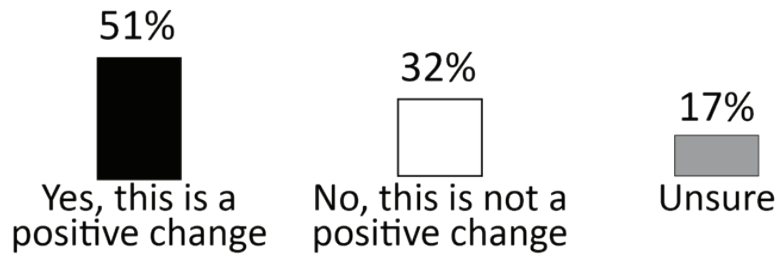
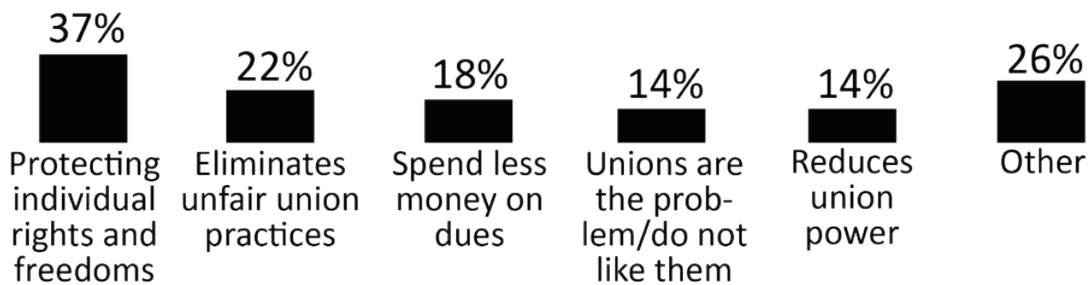


Table 4 lists the summarized unaided reasons why workers believe the changes are positive (n=147), including that the ruling protects their personal rights and freedoms (37%), eliminates what they believe is an unfair labor practice (22%) and allows them to save money by not being forced to pay dues (18%). Others said that unions are the problems and that they did not like them in general (14%) and that they thought power should be taken away from unions (14%).

### Table 4 Reasons for Believing U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Is a Positive Change

Why is it positive? (Unaided)

Base: 147



Several offered specific comments that illustrate one or more of these themes:

- *If the union is not supporting or representing the worker, then he or she should not be required to pay money for unfair treatment.*
- *Currently the need for unions has diminished. However, we are still forced to be part by paying money into a group we do not wish to belong.*
- *This is positive because it gives people the ability to get the benefits of a union, while not having to spend the money they work for. This gives people the ability to feel more secure to do their job without worrying about paying.*
- *I believe people should be able to choose whether or not they are part of a union. Some people might not feel the union represents them or cannot afford for union dues to be taken out of their paychecks.*
- *I have been in three different teacher unions and although I support the idea of unions in general, I sometimes do not always support how they use union dues. So, I feel that being able to choose would be good.*
- *I'm no longer forced to give my money to the union, that I can now decide based and how I feel the union is doing representing me.*

## Intentions to Pay Union Dues

Regardless of whether members are aware of the ruling and how they view this change, what are public sector union members likely to do moving forward? Table 5 shows that 6% say that they have already stopped paying dues and 25% say they are planning to stop paying.

**Table 5**  
**Intention to Continue Paying Union Dues**

Will you continue to pay fees to your union, or will you decline to do so in the future?

Base: 311



When asked why they have stopped paying or intend to stop paying (n=89), members offer several reasons which are displayed in Table 6. The top two reasons include that these members think paying the dues is an unfair practice (33%) and that it saves them money (33%). Others say that unions do not support things that they want (19%), they do not want to be in a union (19%) or some other reason (20%).

Several offered specific comments that help illustrate these findings:

- *I don't intend to keep paying for the union, because it hasn't helped my life in anyway.*
- *The union does not represent me. I think we should vote with our money, and if a union doesn't do its job, it shouldn't get paid by me.*
- *I don't believe in unions and was forced to join one by my employer.*
- *I don't agree with some of the things my union does, especially on the local level. Also, the dues that they charge are extremely high; way too high for the supposed benefit that we get.*
- *Because I believe that the union does not bargain in the best interest of the employees. Every year, the employees lose out on something, whether it is health insurance costs, or longevity bonuses, enough is enough.*

**Table 6**  
**Rationale for Stopping Dues Payments**

Can you describe further why you have, or will soon, stop paying your union dues?

Base: 89

