

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association**

### **What is the *Friedrichs* Supreme Court case about?**

*Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, a Supreme Court case funded by billionaire extremists, is the latest in a long line of lawsuits and laws pushed by big corporations and the wealthy few aimed at making it harder for working people to improve their lives by sticking together and pooling resources. Those behind the Friedrichs case seek to limit the power of teachers, firefighters, police officers, nurses and other public service workers to come together to advocate for our children, our safety, and for good jobs for themselves and all Americans.

Their strategy to limit our power is to eliminate a fee that non-union members pay toward covering the costs of bargaining contracts that improve pay, benefits and other working conditions. These commonsense fees, which the Supreme Court has upheld for decades, mean that everyone covered by a contract contributes to the costs of negotiating those benefits.

### **What's at stake for school bus drivers, police officers, child protection workers, and all public service workers?**

The billionaire-funded lawyers behind this case seek to eliminate a fee that non-union members pay toward covering the costs of bargaining contracts to improve people's pay, benefits and other working conditions. These commonsense fees, designed to cover everyone's fair share toward contracts that apply to everyone in a workplace, have been upheld by the Supreme Court for decades.

We know firsthand what happens when people come together for a voice at work. It means that we can help give everyone a fair shot at a good life. It means that teachers can stand up for their students. First responders can push for critical equipment to protect us. Social workers can advocate effectively for children's safety. And that's exactly what's at stake in this case.

### **Why should someone be compelled to pay a fee that the union then turns around and uses to support political causes that worker opposes? The union shouldn't be able to use union dues for politics.**

The truth is no one has to be involved in political work or pay for it. That's the law already. People pay only for covering the costs of bargaining contracts that improve our pay, benefits and other working conditions. And that's just common sense.

Everyone has the freedom to choose whether or not they want to contribute to support advocacy around issues that impact their lives outside of the contract--and there's nothing more democratic than that.

### **I've heard that this case is about free speech but I'm confused. What does free speech have to do with it?**

It's confusing because their argument defies common sense. The lawyers in this case say that paying your fair share of the costs of bargaining a contract covering your

own pay, benefits and working conditions is the same thing as being forced to participate in political lobbying. Strangely, the lawyers then argue these fees violate the First Amendment. We all know what free speech is and we know what a contract is about. Who would ever confuse the two?

### **What's the timeline?**

The Supreme Court will hear the case and announce its decision during the 2015-16 term, which runs from October 2015 through June 2016.

### **What are social workers, 911 operators, school custodians, teaching assistants and other public workers doing to prepare for the decision?**

As a tiny handful of billionaire extremists try to lead America in one direction, the rest of the country knows that we can't build a strong future with corporations pushing our wages down and jeopardizing our families' futures. That's why people from all walks of life are standing up to demand higher wages and unions in numbers we haven't seen in decades. They've united under the Fight for \$15 movement and are already getting results like winning raises for over 11 million people in two short years.

No matter what any court decides, hardworking mothers and fathers across the country will continue their movement to improve life for themselves and their children. We will keep taking action in the streets, in our worksites, and at the ballot box to stand up for jobs that give everyone a fair shot at a secure future.

### **How does the *Friedrichs* case relate to *Harris v. Quinn*?**

The *Friedrichs* case is just the latest in a long line of lawsuits and laws pushed by big corporations and the wealthy few aimed at making it harder for working people to stick together and pool resources. They seek to limit the power of teachers, firefighters, child protection workers, nurses, and other public workers to advocate for our children, our safety, and for good jobs for themselves and all Americans.

The *Harris v. Quinn* decision in June 2014 made it harder for home care workers to join together but the court declined to eliminate the commonsense fees that require public employees covered by a contract to contribute to the costs of those benefits. Yet the billionaire-funded lawyers are trying once again to weaken the power of working people to improve their lives and their communities by bringing the *Friedrichs* case to the Supreme Court.