



COMMUNIQUE

UNIONS RALLY AHEAD OF JANUS SUPREME COURT CASE

By Marci Rosenblum, Local 1180 Communications Director

Just two days before the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) was scheduled to hear the case that could change the face of labor as we know it, hundreds of union workers gathered in lower Manhattan in a show of unity and to send a strong message that organized labor will not be defeated.

On Saturday, February 24, workers from both the public and private sector flooded Foley Square. Joining them was a wide array of both state and city officials, including Gov. Cuomo, State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio, and NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, who all agree that the case of Janus v. AFSCME only seeks to destroy a system that protects those who keep our city, state, and country running.

The Working People's Day of Action was about demanding an end to the rigged economy and defending our freedoms. Unions stood up for the freedom of working people to come together and fight for decent and equitable pay for our work, affordable health care, quality schools, vibrant communities and a secure future for all of us.

On Monday, February 26, SCOTUS began hearing arguments in Janus v. AFSCME — the controversial legal challenge of the "agency fee," which public employee unions including New York, charge workers who are represented by those unions — even if they officially decline membership. Full union members pay union dues while non-members pay the "agency fee," which covers only contract-related union functions such as negotiations and enforcement, including grievance procedures.

Gov. Cuomo called the rallying workers "the heart and soul" of the country. Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton agreed, saying, "All across this country we see labor being attacked on all fronts and most often, facing huge setbacks. New York is different. We are a union state, a union city, and we will not sit back and wait for the Supreme Court to make a decision that attempts to dismantle organized labor."

Middleton said that since #45 took office, we have a federal administration that is clearly an enemy of the working, middle-class men and women of this nation, the backbone of what keeps government functioning. Unions say the outcome could affect more than 5 million government workers.

Cuomo and de Blasio, both Democrats, vowed to protect unions regardless of how the Supreme Court rules. "We will not let our city or our country be taken over by the 1 percent," said de Blasio, who added that New York City "is the biggest union town in America and we are proud of that."

Cuomo said workers "need the strength and solidarity of the labor movement more now than ever." He pledged that "as long as I am governor of the state of New York, the state of New York is going to have the back of organized labor."