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# FRIEDRICHS: THE MIDDLE CLASS UNDER ATTACK

## Defining the Friedrichs Ruse

One of the most frightening labor lawsuits in recent memory and an affront to working men and women everywhere is currently before the U.S. Supreme Court: Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association. The case challenges a precedent that has long been a pillar of stabilization for the world of public-sector unions.

"Anti-union forces have spent decades now chipping away at union rights," said AFT Faculty Guild President Joanne Waddell. "If Friedrichs goes the wrong way, the playing field will be permanently on tilt where the wealthy 1 percent will have far more influence than working people will."

So what is this all-important case that has recently grabbed the national spotlight?

### 1. The General Idea

Rebecca Friedrichs and the other plaintiffs have decided that paying agency fees – their fair share for receiving all the benefits of union representation and collective bargaining – is an infringement of their First Amendment right to free speech and believe that they should not have to pay them. This would overturn the 1977 case *Aboud v. Detroit Board of Education*. The argument against this is clear: Even

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## Building Power

With an impending decision from the United States Supreme Court later this year in the Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association lawsuit – an overt attack on America's middle class by anti-union special interests – AFT 1521 is engaged in an ambitious and groundbreaking membership drive that is bound to shape and strengthen the Guild for years to come.

The Friedrichs case challenges the long-held tenet of agency fee payers, non-union members who pay their fair share because they too benefit from the hard work involved in negotiating fair contracts and ensuring workplace protections. Ever since the specter of Friedrichs raised its ugly head, the Guild has made a concerted effort to turn its approximately 1,600 agency fee payers into full-fledged members.

So far, the organizing campaign has paid off.

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## CFT Rallies Before Friedrichs Oral Arguments

Representatives from the California Federation of Teachers made their way to Washington, D.C. on Jan. 11 to rally in opposition to the Supreme Court case Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association. The justices of the court heard oral arguments for what could easily be regarded as the most important court decision for public sector unions in recent memory.

"If the forces behind such cases are successful, access to economic stability for our future generations will be made significantly more challenging," said CFT Senior Vice President Lacy Barnes at the demonstration that took place on the steps of the Supreme Court.

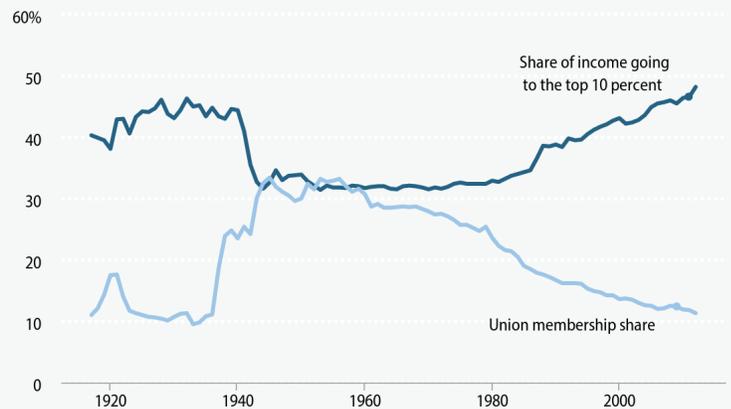
If the plaintiffs win, the agency fee precedent would essentially be eliminated and unions would lose that monetary backing for their operations. Others in attendance from the CFT contingent included Secretary Treasurer Jeff Freitas.

The court justices asked questions of the lawyers and voiced their initial thoughts and concerns regarding the

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### Decline in union membership mirrors income gains of top 10%

Union membership and share of income going to the top 10%, 1917-2012



Source: Data on union density follow the composite series found in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, updated to 2012 from unionstats.com. Income inequality (share of income to top 10%) from Piketty and Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(1), 2003, 1-39. Updated and downloadable data, for this series and other countries, are available at *The World's Top Income Database*. Updated September 2013.

One of the main causes of stagnant wages and rising wage inequality is the decline of collective bargaining which has lowered the wages of both union and nonunion workers. This figure shows that the drop in the share of workers under collective bargaining contracts is the mirror image of the rise of incomes of the top 10 percent. Courtesy Economic Policy Institute

# President's Message

Guild President  
Joanne Waddell



## Facing the Friedrichs Challenge Head On

Colleagues, This special edition of Read On focuses on the important challenge we currently face — the case of *Friedrichs v. CTA* — now being considered by the U.S. Supreme Court. When you analyze the issues, you'll find that this case is about the many vs. the money and about whether freeloaders have the right to reap the benefits of collective bargaining that is paid for by others.

While we work with AFT at the national level to influence the Supreme Court decision, we're counting on you to help at the local level. Here's what you can do:

- **Familiarize yourself with the issues.** This edition of Read On will help. If you need more information, contact your Chapter President or call me at (323) 851-1521.
- **Remind yourself and those around you how collective bargaining has improved your working conditions,** especially when you compare them to working conditions in non-unionized colleges. Salary increases, seniority rights, peer evaluation, a grievance process, work load,

academic freedom, a voice on campus — all examples of improvements to working conditions *we've collectively bargained!*

- **Commit to Building Guild Power.** Check your pay stub. If there is a deduction labeled "member 1521," you're in! You are already a member, helping to ensure that our union is strong and united as the Guild prepares for the outcome of the Friedrichs case. If there is a deduction labeled "fee payer 1521," contact your Chapter President (under College Chapters on the AFT 1521 homepage) or our member organizer Herlim Li at herlim45@gmail.com. Fees are already deducted from LACCD faculty's paychecks so it costs you nothing to join.
- **Spread the word!** Ask your colleagues, especially new faculty, if they are Guild members. Let your chapter president or Herlim Li know if you need membership cards.

We're better together!

*In unity,*  
Joanne Waddell  
President, AFT 1521

## FRIEDRICHS

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if one is not a union member, benefits are still being reaped by fee payers through contract negotiations and enforcement of workplace protections that require financial backing, so everyone should pay their fair share.

### 2. Why the Alarm?

If such agency fee payers do not become members, labor's collective voice will be weakened and corporate special interests strengthened. Not only is this bad for organized labor, but the decline in unionism over the past several decades is highly correlated to the decline of middle class America overall, and this would further widen the income inequality gap that has become so apparent in this country.

### 3. The Opposition

The plaintiffs in the Friedrichs lawsuit would have outsiders believe this is a story of a

beleaguered educator fighting for her free speech rights. This is far from the truth. The suit was filed by the Center for Individual Rights, a group that has ties to some of the most notorious anti-labor groups: the Koch brothers and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

In the end, the Friedrichs case is a ruse drummed up by politically conservative interest groups that want to see organized labor come to an end.

"Working people over the years have formed coalitions called unions, pooled their money, and fought to protect their rights," Waddell said. "A negative outcome in the Friedrichs case will hamper unions in their efforts to ensure working people are treated fairly and with dignity."

## BUILDING POWER

(Continued from Front)

In the fall, 612 fee payers signed union cards. The goal this spring is to sign up another 800.

Herlim Li has spearheaded the Guild's membership push. AFT has provided three organizers, and CFT has provided funding for four AFT 1521 adjunct faculty to also get the word out.

"The clear and present danger is Friedrichs," Li said. "I think if the job's done right, it's a storm that we can weather."

Li's process is straightforward, but not always simple: Identify the fee payers, locate them, and get them to sign up. Getting in touch with the fee payers can be easier said than done, as most are adjuncts with varying schedules spread across nine campuses.

Li said that most of the time the fee payers simply aren't aware that they're not union members and quickly sign up. Others need a little more convincing or just don't know the role the union plays.

"More often than not, people thank me," Li said. "People are positive about it once we explain the situation in which organized labor finds itself."

## ORAL ARGUMENTS

(Continued from Front)

A decision is expected to come sometime later this year, and although no date has been officially set, it could come as early as March or as late as June.

Los Angeles College Faculty Guild President Joanne Waddell expressed her apprehension as she awaits a ruling.

"It's difficult to accept that the fate of unions depends on one or two conservative justices, but that's the situation we're in," Waddell said.

Staff  
Box

The newsletter of the  
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## Myriad AFT Member Benefits

In addition to the benefits of fair pay and workplace protections, AFT members have access to a great number of exclusive deals. Just a few to take advantage of include:

- **Insurance:** Auto, home, life, pet and more. Special rates and discounts have been made available just for AFT members.
- **Health:** Save on dental procedures, gym memberships, up to 35 percent on eye exams, and up to 60 percent on prescriptions.
- **Shopping:** Discounts on books, skincare, wireless services, cars, flowers, computers and more.
- **Travel and Entertainment:** Everything from hotels (up to 20 percent off) to movie tickets (up to 40 percent off).

For more information and a full list of benefits, visit [aft.org/benefits](http://aft.org/benefits).



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