



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Members of largest state employee union vow to stick together after Janus decision**

Members of the largest state employees' union, the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association, today say no court decision will change the fact that public sector unions give workers a powerful voice to speak up for themselves, their families and their communities. The U.S. Supreme Court today reversed a lower court ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, overturning long-standing precedent that allowed public sector employees to come together in strong unions.

"Today's decision will only further rig the economy in favor of the wealthy and corporate interests," said Chris Mabe, president of the union representing most State of Ohio workers. "Make no mistake: This wasn't a grassroots movement of disgruntled workers. This was a well-funded attack by groups like the National Right to Work Foundation and their wealthy corporate supporters and lobbyists who have spent millions to try to take away our freedoms," he said. "But no group of extremists will change our members' resolve to stick together and lift up our collective voices," said Mabe.

"Our politicians should be making it easier to join unions, not harder," said Kathy Stewart, the union's secretary-treasurer. "This country needs unions more than ever," she said.

"It's not like wages are climbing on their own or that health care is becoming more affordable. OCSEA members and all public workers need the ability to come together for good-paying jobs and better wages," said the union's vice president, Kelvin Jones.

While the court decision is not a welcome one, a similar attack in Ohio several years ago, called Senate Bill 5, showed that the vast majority of Ohioans support workers' ability to come together to bargain for improved working conditions.

"I was one of the thousands of workers who took to the streets to protest Senate Bill 5," said Karen Ryther, a Disability Claims Adjudicator for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities in Columbus. "What I saw was Ohioans supporting public employees and our ability to come together for safer staffing levels and safety on the job. That was a powerful testimony and another reason why union members like me are resolving to stand strong together," she said.

"Strong unions make our communities stronger. They're the best – and sometimes the only – route to the middle class," said Jim Larocca, a Cleveland Lottery employee. "Public sector union jobs are often the best jobs in small towns and cities across Ohio," he said.

"Corrections employees, highway workers, teachers and police officers deserve our respect, not these attacks. That's why we'll never quit advocating for them and helping them to build

power together,” said Mabe. “Workers are rising up like never before in this country to demand that the nation put workers before wealth,” he said.

*OCSEA members from around the state are weighing in on today’s decision and why they are sticking together with their co-workers in their union:*

Stephani Clevenger-Murphy, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (Columbus)

“My union contract gives me the freedom to focus on my family when they get sick. That’s what real freedom is. With paid leave, I can give my family the attention they need, knowing that my work won’t suffer. That’s why I’m sticking with the union.”

Eric Kusky, Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction (Youngstown)

“I’m standing strong with the union because my union helps us gain vital protections for workers, giving us a voice when it comes to health and safety provisions in the workplace. When Ohio’s prisons are safe, and have sufficient staff, so are our communities.”

Gina Jackson, BWC (Cleveland)

“Having a union has opened up so many opportunities for me. My union’s vast education programs have given me, and so many like me, the resources to be a more effective and highly-skilled public worker. My union knows, when we invest in workers’ education and career advancement, everyone benefits!”

Bret Pitts, ODOT (Sidney, Lima)

“Collaborative efforts between union workers and the State of Ohio—as in the case of Ohio’s Move Over law—make roadways safer for first responders, highway workers and the travelling public.”

Jill Tummler-Mackenzie, Industrial Commission (Cincinnati)

“The union difference is clear. Unions, and the good benefits they afford, attract the best workers. Public service is a calling, and we all have a passion for our careers, but no matter how much we love it, a low-paid job with little security is unsustainable.”

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*OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state and local government employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).*