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AFT LOCAL 1839 PROFESSIONAL STAFF NEWSLETTER

FALL 2018

IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER OF THE UNION, NOW IS THE TIME TO JOIN

By Christopher Cofone

"This is opinion - not news."

In case you still haven't heard, the United States Supreme Court ruled in June that government workers will no longer be required to pay dues to their unions. The case, known as *Janus vs. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees*, stipulates that it is unconstitutional to require government workers to pay a "fair share fee" or "agency fee" to unions for the protection given to them under collective bargaining if they choose not to be members.

How this affects public worker unions remains to be seen. More workers may join and become full paying members of the unions. Others may not join, rather choosing to be freeloaders – they will have the same rights as paying members, without paying the dues. What unions ought to look into doing is to charge non-paying members for representation, if they ever need it.

Unions will lose the revenue collected from agency fees, so if that isn't made up from people becoming full members, union operations may be adversely affected. Unions may be weakened to the point where management is able to take advantage of this and starting taking more and more away from union members. Hopefully, our salaries and benefits won't sink to the level of poverty. Who knows. We may end up like the old Soviet Union, where the communists had a saying: "I pretend to work, you pretend to pay me."

What's always seemed odd to me is how people who run colleges (many of whom did not grow up in or reside for any significant period of time in the state where they run the college) say things like "We want our students to get good jobs with good companies" – yet at many public universities in the U.S. these same folks are doing everything they can to drive down salaries and take away benefits of the staff who work at their institutions. Some of us believe that one of the points of going to college is to improve one's standard of living – not lower it. The vast majority of people who work at a college as part of the

professional staff or faculty have at least a master's degree. Yet sometimes it seems like all of this higher education isn't valued by the people who are in charge of running colleges. How does this help any current students who want to work in public service? Their standard of living is going to go down, not up. It also isn't going to help any future graduates if wage stagnation in all industries continues and if private industry also continues its efforts to drive down salaries. And then they're looking to recruit new students and sell them on attending college? Seems like kind of a backwards way of looking at things.

"We may end up like the old Soviet Union, where the communists had a saying: "I pretend to work, you pretend to pay me."

Politicians and college administrators sometimes complain that's there's not enough money to pay for this and that, yet they keep college campuses open when there are no classes, like the day after Thanksgiving, thereby wasting taxpayer money (at least a little bit) on electricity and water. Maybe someone ought to run a statistical analysis on this and report back to the taxpayers (that would be us).

In any case, what people who don't like public worker unions leave out when they express their displeasure – either knowingly, or due to a lack of awareness – is that any states like New Jersey that have budget issues, the problems are because of our elected representatives in the state capitals – not because of workers. Public employees did not create this financial mess. The members of the state assembly and state senate, as well as governors, are the ones responsible for the state's dire straits. Yet the blame always gets shifted to us. The Democrats and Republicans are the same when it comes to this. They all pass the buck. Based on the direction we're going, current college students may want to think twice before going into public or government service.

If anyone wants to know who is to blame for this fiasco, here in Jersey they have names like Jim Florio, Christie Whitman, Jim McGreevy, Jon Corzine, and Chris Christie. I hope I don't have to add Phil Murphy to that list in the future.

Become a full member of the union at NJCU.

Contact AFT Office Assistant Sam Platizky, Grossnickle Hall, room 421; (201) 200-2216, AFTLocal1839@NJCU.EDU

UNION NEWS ARTICLES

News regarding other Unions around the United States:

The Cold War between the Major League Baseball Players Association and team owners is only going to get uglier: <https://nyp.st/2JvjgLV>

“There’s a lot that can happen between now and 2021. ... Our players are very passionate about the rights they have....To the extent that there are challenges to those rights, historically, I would suggest those have manifested themselves a particular way.” - Players Association executive director Tony Clark, in response to a question about a work stoppage after the current collective-bargaining agreement expires in 2021

98% Of Voice Actors Approve TV Animation Strike Authorization: <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/artist-rights/98-of-voice-actors-approve-tv-animation-strike-authorization-162253.html>

Over 98% of voice actors represented by SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) have voted yes in favor of a TV animation strike authorization. The results were made public by the union on July 18. Actors are threatening to call a strike over sub-par terms for performers working on animated series for subscription-based streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon.

More than 400 union workers at Washington Post demand raise: <https://nyp.st/2yidBx1>

More than 400 unionized employees of the Washington Post have signed a public letter asking its multibillionaire owner Jeff Bezos for a raise.

Labor’s Last Stand: <https://harpers.org/archive/2018/09/labor-last-stand-supreme-court-janus-decision-unions/>

Unions must either demand a place at the table or be part of the meal.

New Jersey public workers pay higher percentage of health care costs than workers in private industry, analysis says: http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/11/nj_public_workers_pay_high_percentage_of_health_care_costs_analysis_says.html

The average New Jersey government worker pays more for individual health insurance coverage than public workers in any other state. In addition, the analysis shows New Jersey’s state and local government employees are paying a much higher percentage of the cost of their individual health insurance policies than private-sector workers in the state have been paying.

N.J. looking for fraud in public employee health benefits: https://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2018/07/nj_looking_for_fraud_in_public_employee_health_ben.html

Governor Phil Murphy’s administration has begun an audit of participants in the government worker health benefits plans that it estimates will save the state \$77 million.

Governor Phil Murphy vacations in Italy: https://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2018/08/gov_phil_murphy_vacations_in_italy_whats_the_jerse.html

The governor’s office initially declined the reveal where Murphy was going for his holiday, but NJ.com solved the mystery and reported that Italy was the destination. The state’s taxpayers will pick up the tab for protecting the governor while he’s on vacation, with the tab reaching as much as \$100,000.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy embarked on a eleven day trip to Italy in July, where he owns a \$7 million home he bought during his 23-year stint at Goldman Sachs: <https://fxn.ws/2NXDGog>

The trip comes just six months after Murphy was elected to the top job in the state.

New Jersey colleges are among the best (and worst) in these categories, ranking says. No hard liquor? Bad dorms? Poor profs? How N.J. colleges fare in new Princeton Review rankings: https://www.nj.com/education/2018/08/nj_colleges_among_the_best_and_the_worst_in_these_1.html

Here is the full rundown of where the state's colleges placed on the lists, which are based solely on student surveys.

'Medicare for all' could save businesses trillions of dollars: https://www.yahoo.com/news/medicare-save-businesses-trillions-dollars-190500400.html?soc_src=hl-viewer&soc_trk=tw

American businesses, now the biggest source of health care coverage in the United States, could completely exit the business of providing health care, if national or even statewide single-payer coverage ever takes root. That could make American firms more competitive globally and leave a lot more money for employee raises and other benefits.

Why did Rutgers pay fired Athletic Director Julie Hermann \$500,000 more than she was owed? https://www.nj.com/rutgersfootball/index.ssf/2018/08/why_did_rutgers_pay_fired_ad_julie_hermann_500k_mo.html

Hermann, who agreed to a five-year deal worth \$2.25 million in May 2013, was paid a total of \$1,658,455.15 in the 31 months she didn't serve as Rutgers' Athletic Director.

Rutgers will give this guy \$480,000 to go on vacation. It didn't have to. https://www.nj.com/education/2018/07/rutgers_will_give_this_guy_480k_to_go_on_vacation.html

Rutgers called the paid year off standard procedure for a longtime college administrator planning to return to teaching, but a faculty union official blasted the agreement as "fiscally irresponsible."

The hardest (and easiest) N.J. colleges to get accepted to: https://www.nj.com/education/2018/08/the_hardest_and_easiest_nj_college_to_get_accepted.html#incart_2box_nj-homepage-featured

Acceptance rates run the gamut from one of the country's most exclusive universities to several colleges that take almost everyone who applies.

NJCU AFT LOCAL 1839 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Fall 2018/Spring 2019:

Monday, September 17th
Monday, October 8th
Monday, November 5th
Monday, December 3rd
Monday, February 4th
Monday, March 4th
Monday, April 8th
Monday, May 13th

All meetings are at 2:00 pm and in the Gothic Lounge (Hepburn Hall Room 202) unless otherwise noted.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR EVENTS

- **NJCU website calendar:** <https://www.njcu.edu/news>
- **Speicher-Rubin Women's Center for Equity and Diversity:** <https://www.njcu.edu/speicher>
- **Campus Life:** <https://www.njucampuslife.com/community-service-volunteerism>
- **Center for the Arts:** <https://www.njcu.edu/about/center-arts>

WRITE FOR INBOX

Any faculty or staff who would like to contribute articles for future issues can email Christopher Cofone, ccofone@njcu.edu