

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

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**June 29, 2018**

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## Supreme Court Rules Against Unions in *Janus v. AFSCME*

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against unions this week, delivering a major attack on workers' rights. In a 5-4 decision in the case of [\*Janus v. AFSCME Council 31\*](#), the court ruled that agency fees are unconstitutional. Unions still have to represent all employees in their workplace, but "free riders" can now benefit from union contracts without contributing to the efforts.

"There is no sugarcoating today's opinion," Justice **Elena Kagan** wrote in her dissent. "The majority overthrows a decision entrenched in this Nation's law—and in its economic life—for over 40 years. As a result, it prevents the American people, acting through their state and local officials, from making important choices about workplace governance." She added, "The First Amendment was meant for better things."

Labor organizations have been preparing for a ruling against unions for months. Many have been engaging their members, building stronger relationships, organizing internally, and educating the public about the benefits unions provide families and communities.

Funded by a web of billionaire conservative donors including the Koch brothers, the Janus lawsuit aimed to bleed unions dry of precious resources. A lack of financial capability will ensure increased difficulty for organized workers trying to improve their workplace.

Wednesday's decision affects both current workers and retirees. Unions are instrumental in negotiating better pension and health insurance plans that benefit older workers and those transitioning into retirement. Check [www.freedomtojoin.org](http://www.freedomtojoin.org) to see what you can do, to pledge your support and to get e-mail updates.

While the Janus case effectively makes the whole country "right-to-work," the power of collective bargaining continues to thwart corporate interests. In a single week this year, over 14,000 workers formed or joined a union. There have been historic grassroots movements and teacher walkouts, showing the power of collective bargaining to bring better wages and workplace conditions.

"Today's anti-union decision, funded by corporate interests, will not deter us from fighting to bring a better life for workers and retirees," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "No matter who tries to bring us down, the Alliance will stand with labor unions to protect active and retired workers' rights throughout the country."

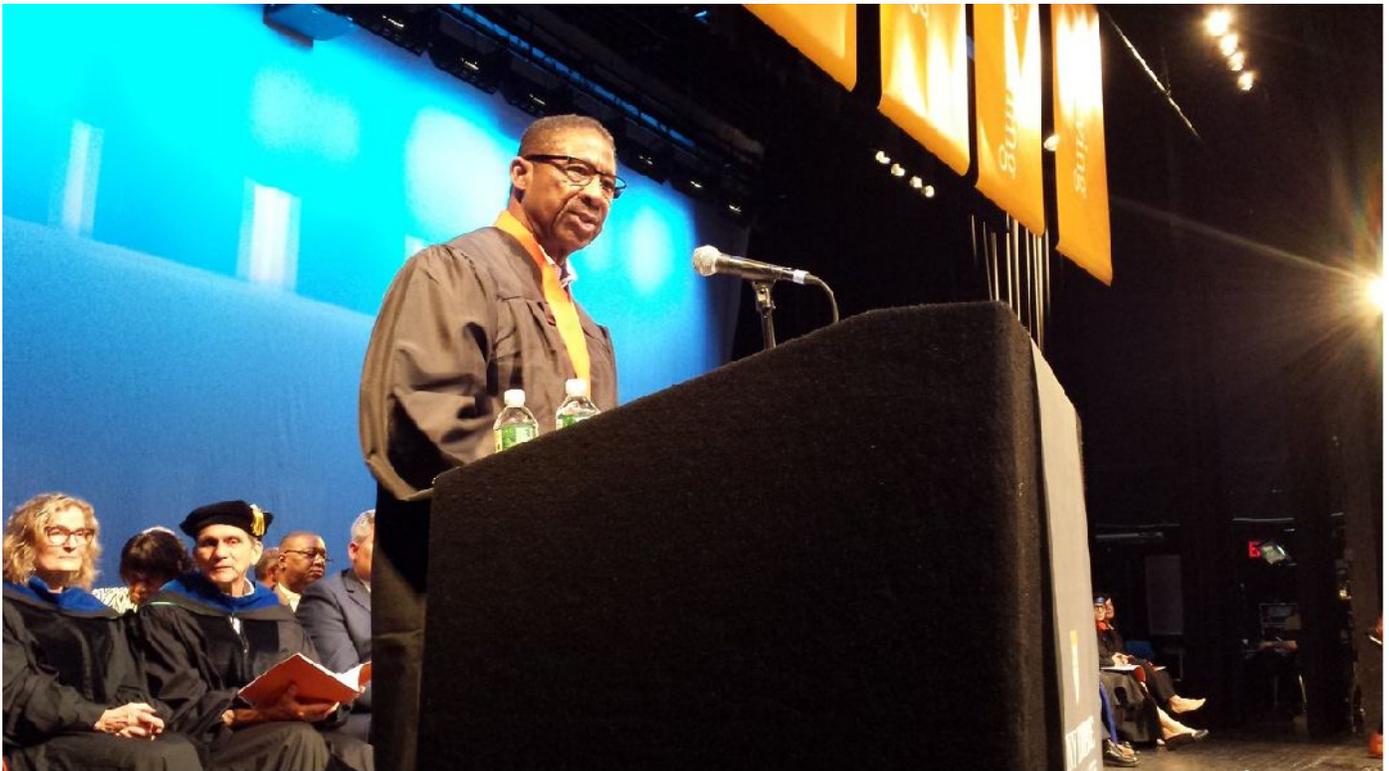
**Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, added, "Justice Kagan said in her dissent that the court's majority is weaponizing the First Amendment. I agree wholeheartedly."

## President Roach Addresses SUNY Graduates at their Commencement

On June 8 President Roach spoke at the commencement ceremony at the State University of New York (SUNY) Harry Van Arsdale Center for Labor Studies in New York City. Having recently attended the memorial tribute marking the 50th anniversary of **Robert F. Kennedy** (RFK)'s tragic assassination, President Roach evoked the former Senator's [Ripple of Hope speech](#) in addressing the graduates.

He told the graduates it is their obligation to change their communities, as the Parkland High School students in Florida have recently been doing following the shootings at their school. He advised them to transform the nation by energizing their communities, and reminded them that the world is depending on them. In doing so, he referenced the parents and grandparents of the graduates who had helped them reach their goals.

The RFK memorial that President Roach attended featured 15 speakers who each repeated an RFK quote. Parkland High School student **Emma Gonzalez**, Rep. **Joseph Kennedy III**, Rep. **John Lewis** (GA), Sen. **Ed Markey** (MA), House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi**, and American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** were among the fifteen. Former President **Bill Clinton** also spoke at the musical memorial service.



President Roach at SUNY, June 8, 2018

June 6 was the 52nd anniversary of Senator Robert F. Kennedy's "Ripple of Hope" speech. Delivered at the University of Cape Town in South Africa during the height of apartheid, many believe the address was the greatest speech of his life. At that time, RFK said he was speaking for all those who were not free to speak.

“Robert F. Kennedy gave hope to anti-apartheid student activists who felt alone in their struggle for racial equality, and he showed them that their efforts connected to other civil rights movements around the world,” said President Roach. “It is a lesson that is still true in our country this week.”

## **Rising Health Insurance Premiums will Come to Light as Midterm Elections Approach**

Efforts to destabilize and sabotage the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are making affordable insurance options harder to find.

Premiums across the nation are projected to hike by [double digits](#) over their existing costs for 2019. Many insurance providers are citing the [tax scam](#) passed late last year for the rise in prices. The tax bill included a repeal of the individual mandate that all adults must have health insurance, which allows younger healthier adults to drop out of plans. This raises the premiums significantly for older and sicker Americans.

The administration also eliminated cost sharing reduction policies, aimed at keeping premiums lower for those more likely to need the insurance coverage. Reduction policies helped to protect patients with pre-existing conditions, as they incentivized the insurance industry to cover more patients without a large financial burden.

“Congress and the administration are sabotaging all efforts aimed at protecting patients,” said **Joseph Peters Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The GOP is going to have to answer for that in November, because the midterm elections will come just as premiums for 2019 skyrocket.”

Additionally, the administration has permitted the creation of more association health plans. These plans typically do not meet the coverage requirements laid out by the ACA, and attract healthier adults who can skimp on coverage. That in turn further drives up premiums for older and sicker adults.

The President has decided not to defend major provisions of the ACA in court, also eliminating important protections for patients with pre-existing conditions.

## **Indiana Alliance Holds Annual Convention**

The Indiana Alliance for Retired Americans held its annual convention in Indianapolis last Friday. Members heard from a variety of notable speakers, including United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 2B Director **Rich Ranken** and **Randy Schmidt**, the chairman of the Indiana Democratic Senior Caucus.

**Julia Vaughn**, the director of Common Cause Indiana, gave a presentation about two successful lawsuits challenging voter suppression motives in the state. The first challenged the lack of early voting at satellite locations in the state’s largest county and led to the establishment of at least two additional early voting satellite locations for the 2018 general election. The second lawsuit led to a preliminary injunction preventing counties from purging voters without proper notice and a waiting period.



Indiana's convention attendees

**Ashley Sorrell**, the granddaughter of former UAW Assistant Director **Gary Sorrell**, presented on behalf of Pathways for Success, an organization working to assist communities and families struggling with opioid addictions. **Barbara Miller** of Senior Medicare Patrol spoke about new Medicare cards with increased protection from identity theft.

Alliance Field Manager **Maureen Dunn** reported on the national Alliance's initiatives. **John Cardwell** spoke about The Generations Project, which educates citizens, advocates, and policy makers about opportunities for Hoosiers to implement a balanced and responsible long term care system. Indiana Alliance President **Elmer Blankenship** and UAW Retiree Representative **Danny Ernstes** also spoke.

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The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.