



UA Member Update- January 19, 2016

Update on *Friedrichs vs. California* Critical Supreme Court case for all public sector union members

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association*. The plaintiffs argued that, because public-sector unions bargain with government officials, anything they do is inherently political. Under the First Amendment, people cannot be compelled to support political speech with which they disagree. Traditionally, unions have tried to accommodate this argument with what we call the Agency Fee, or “Fair Share”, which allows members of our bargaining unit not to join the union or support its political activities, while paying a fee that reflects the fact that they are covered by any agreement we negotiate, and are entitled to our support in the event of a grievance. *Friedrichs* would go further and allow people to opt out entirely. The mood at the oral argument was not a sympathetic one. There is a good case that the California Teachers’ Association and all other public sector unions will lose.

What we can do: UA members and the staffers who help us are visiting Departments and Colleges this semester to talk about why and how our union matters. To participate in conversations with your colleagues – or to communicate about any ideas, questions, or concerns – contact your Delegate or Representative, or the Executive Council members who represent you.

The thin silver lining around the storm cloud of this case is that it spurs labor union leaderships to do what we should and want to be doing anyway, listening to members and potential members, finding out what matters to you, and making the case for unions. We will represent every single professor at the University of Vermont – no matter what the Supreme Court says or does.

Honoring a Great Leader – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear Colleagues-

Too often, Martin Luther King Day is seen as a holiday, rather than a celebration of one of America’s great fighters for freedom and economic justice. I collected some quotations that bear special relevance to us, or are among his greatest.

Dan Wells

Communication Director

To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.

. . . I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider.

From *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

We are grappling with problems so big now and so deeply rooted in the structure of our society, that it will take the forthright efforts of the federal government, organized labor, men of good will in industry, and the religious

forces of the nation working together with [African Americans] to solve them. . . We do not need allies who are more devoted to order than to justice, and who would prefer a negative peace which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace which is the presence of justice. .

From a letter found in the August Meier papers at the Schomburg Center by UA President Felicia Kornbluh.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

. . . With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

From the *I Have a Dream* speech (March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963)

Upcoming Meetings:

Next Executive Council Meeting Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2:00-3:30 PM, Faculty Senate Conference Room (Waterman)

Next Delegates Assembly Meeting Friday, Feb. 12, 1:30-3:00 PM, Bailey/Howe Dean's Conference Room

United Academics Spring Member Meeting Monday, March 21, 2016 4:00-^:00 PM, Sugar Maple Ballroom (Davis Center 400/400D)