

2018 in review

As chronicled in the Northwest Labor Press: some of the year's most important developments for labor and working people.

NATIONAL



Supreme Court rules in *Janus*. Union movement survives.

In a case called *Janus v. AF-SCME*, a 5-4 Republican-appointed majority on the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 27 that state and local public employees can't be required to pay anything at all to the union that represents them, because it would be an unconstitutional violation of their First Amendment free speech rights. The ruling, which overturned a unanimous 1977 Supreme Court decision, was celebrated by anti-union groups as a major blow to the labor movement. The ruling had an immediate impact: Unions representing state and local government workers had to stop collecting "fair share" payments from

represented workers who had chosen not to join the union. That generally meant a loss of 5 to 15 percent of revenue. But fears that the ruling would lead existing members to drop out and stop paying dues proved premature: Around the country, public sector unions actually increased their membership numbers slightly in the wake of the *Janus* decision, thanks to campaigns by members to talk to fellow workers about why unions matter.



Red-state teacher strike wave

It started in West Virginia: Fed up with a four-year wage freeze, the state's 19,000 public school teachers went on strike from Feb. 22 to March 7, and got an anti-union Republican legislature and governor to approve 5 percent

raises for all public employees. Inspired by their example, school teachers in Oklahoma walked off the job statewide on April 2 and gathered 30,000 strong outside the state Capitol; 10 days later, they returned to work with a \$6,000 wage increase. Next, Arizona teachers struck April 26 to May 3, and won an immediate 9 percent raise, to be followed by 5 percent the next two years. Polls showed overwhelming public support for the strikers. In each case, Republican lawmakers who had starved K-12 budgets while cutting corporate taxes had to backtrack in the face of popular revolt.

Trump tries to slash federal workers' union rights. Fails.

On May 25, President Donald Trump signed three executive orders that ended progressive discipline and seniority rights for federal employees, imposed severe limits on the use of "official time" by federal employee union stewards, and sped up the timeline for firing federal employees.

But unions sued in federal court, and on Aug. 25, a federal judge struck down the orders because they violate the spirit and letter of the 1978 law that governs federal labor relations. [Presidents don't get to make their own laws; their job is to enforce and faithfully execute laws passed by Congress.]

OREGON

Top organizing win

Oregon's biggest 2018 organizing win came June 5, when American Association of University Professors and American Federation of Teachers submitted cards to jointly represent 2,400 faculty in all departments at Oregon State University.

WASHINGTON

Best legislative session in years for working people

Union-backed bills that were blocked when Republicans ran the state Senate had much better results this year. Top wins were \$4.2 billion in capital construction funds, \$776 million for long

overdue school employee salary increases, and a paid family and medical leave law that will guarantee workers up to 12 weeks paid time off starting 2020.



Teacher strike wave comes to Southwest Washington

Where local districts balked at giving the Legislature-funded raises, teachers struck for up to 13 days in August and September. As many as 8,000 Washington teachers walked out — 5,000 of them in Southwest Washington — and won raises ranging from 10 to 26 percent.



PacWest wishes all workers a Happy New Year!

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