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**Over 250 rally at UMass Amherst to say: America needs union jobs**

**Rallies also slated for New Bedford, Springfield, Worcester at 5pm this evening**

**Union professors, maintenance workers and more protest billionaire-driven effort to use Supreme Court to further rig the system; leaders and workers call for more union jobs in the community**

*AMHERST, MA:* Over 250 Massachusetts workers, students and community leaders rallied today in Amherst, joining the nationwide Working People's Day of Action to demand more union jobs in America and to defend the freedom to join together in strong unions. They were protesting the billionaire-funded effort to use the Supreme Court to further rig the system against working people.

The campus event today, one of ten in Massachusetts and over 300 nationwide, coincided with the first day of oral arguments in the Supreme Court case, Janus vs. AFSCME, a lawsuit driven by anti-worker CEOs and billionaires to divide working people and limit their power in numbers.

Speakers addressing the crowd included representatives from each campus union - workers who deliver our essential public services - including a graduate student worker, maintenance technician, a professor, a lecturer, and an accountant

"We thought we had to accept workplace air quality that was harming our health. But we have a union that respects and supports all workers. Get involved. This is your workplace. Our mission at UMass Amherst is to provide teaching, research and public services to benefit people in Massachusetts, the nation, and the world. We can only do this in an environment that respects and supports all workers," declared Brad Turner, IT worker and member of the Professional Staff Union of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA).

"I always said I was too busy to get involved in the union. But then I had a bike accident and if I didn't have my union health insurance I could never have paid the \$15,000 hospital bill. I swore I

would never be a passive union member again.” Edwin Murenzi, Graduate Employees Organization member and Phd candidate, Department of Veterinary and Animal Sciences.

The Working People’s Day of Action also coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr. joining striking sanitation workers in Tennessee as they fought for the freedom to join together in a union for dignity and respect on the job.

“I watched soon-to-be union members at UMass Amherst cast their votes, many with the help of an interpreter. They came from places like Nepal, China and Korea for a better life. That group became the proudest union members on campus,” Joe Malinowski, Maintenance Technician and AFSCME 1776 member, speaking about a new buildings and grounds unit in AFSCME Local 1776 Local.

At the rally in the Cape Cod room of the student union, participants called on the Supreme Court to uphold the freedom to form strong unions and asked that it be protected as a sacred American right. Protesters signed a declaration saying, “...we ask that the Justices remember that an attack on democracy in the workplace is an attack on the democratic bedrock of the United States of America...”

Speakers reminded us that unions strengthen our communities and with the respect and dignity provided by a union, public sector workers can deliver high quality services that the public depends on.

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**About the Massachusetts AFL-CIO:** The role of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO is to serve as the unified voice of all organized workers in the Commonwealth and to be a voice for all working people, those in unions and those not yet organized. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families—by working for economic, social and racial justice in the workplace, in our communities, our state and in our nation. Our vision is of a fair and just society that benefits all working people, not a system that’s rigged in favor of the wealthy few. Steven A. Tolman (781-324-8230) is the organization’s President. Find out more at [www.massafcio.org](http://www.massafcio.org).

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