
Unions and “Right to Work”

Segment Length: 3:36 minutes; 4:35 minutes

Videos:

“Robert Reich: Why ‘Right to Work’ is Wrong for Workers”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILV4P5Pq0_0

“Janus v AFSCME Supreme Court Ruling May Crush Unions”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PARay0WVhB8>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. Steven Kreisberg tells John Stossel that unions benefit all workers, regardless of whether they are union members. What does Robert Reich have to say?
2. Robert Reich says right to work laws destroy unions. Use the Stossel video to discuss whether this is true.
3. Teacher Rebecca Friedrichs never asked for the representation of her union, but some say she benefits nonetheless. What does it mean to be a “free rider”? Why are free riders a problem for unions?
4. Robert Reich claims that businesses attracted to states with right to work laws are the most likely to go abroad for cheaper labor. Why might this be the case?
5. Right to work laws will make income inequality worse, says Robert Reich. How could these laws have such an effect?
6. The benefits of union representation are outweighed by the moral costs, Rebecca Friedrichs says. What are the benefits to her? What does she mean by “moral costs”?
7. Forcing someone to help spread an idea he doesn’t believe was thought “sinful and tyrannical” by Thomas Jefferson. How do you think Robert Reich would respond?
8. The Janus v AFSCME case concerns public sector unions. Why are government employees different from those in the private sector in regard to unions?

9. Workers in states with right to work laws are less likely to have health insurance, Robert Reich says. Why might right to work laws cause this?
10. Robert Reich claims that those who favor right to work laws are sponsored by corporations. Why would corporations benefit from right to work laws? How would John Stossel respond to Reich's claim?