

# Supreme Court deadlocks on union fees for Calif. teachers

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

The U.S. Supreme Court gave public employee unions and their Democratic allies a political and financial reprieve Tuesday when it deadlocked over a challenge by nonunion teachers in California to their collective-bargaining fees, a case that probably would have rewritten the nation's labor laws but for the death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia.

The reprieve may prove temporary, however, if a Republican is elected president in November and appoints Scalia's successor. The case underscores the importance of this year's election for a court that appears to be closely divided on crucial issues, including restrictions on abortion, insurance coverage for contraception, and immigration.

Instead of a 5-4 ruling declaring that compulsory union fees violate nonunion members' free-speech rights, the court issued a one-sentence order Tuesday announcing the 4-4 vote that left intact a 1977 decision – by a then-unanimous court – allowing public-sector unions to charge nonmembers for the costs of representing them at the bargaining table.

**Read the whole story**