



Columbia Graduate Assistants Can Unionize, NLRB Says

News

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The article, “Columbia Graduate Assistants Can Unionize, NLRB Says,” featured in *Bloomberg BNA*, discussed the National Labor Relations Board’s (NLRB) recent ruling that Columbia University graduate research and teaching assistants can be considered employees under federal labor law and are eligible to vote on union representation by a United Auto Workers affiliate.

Joe Ambash, who represented Brown in the 2004 case and filed an amicus brief in the Columbia case on behalf of a number of Ivy League universities and other elite schools, told *Bloomberg BNA* that the decision is “breathtaking” in its scope.

“With the stroke of a pen, the NLRB transformed our nation’s colleges and universities from educational institutions into workplaces,” Joe said. “What’s particularly stunning is the sweep of the board’s decision” and its inclusion of student employees other than Ph.D. candidates in the bargaining unit, he said.

Joe said the NLRB’s definition of employee to include student assistants is “simplistic.”

“The board certainly opened the door for unions to organize students,” Joe said. “But the board majority really swept under the carpet the nuances and complexities that go along with it.”

Joe added that he likely will help his university clients to “evaluate what impact it could have on that particular campus.” He also said he will advise those clients to be prepared with communications plans to answer questions about the decision, especially because it coincides with the beginning of a new school year.

To read the full article, please visit [*Bloomberg BNA*](#).

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