

Protests erupt across US over barbaric anti-abortion ban in Alabama

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In the wake of the barbaric law passed in Alabama last week banning the right to an abortion, thousands of people took to the streets over the weekend to protest this latest attack on the reproductive rights of women and democratic rights of the working class.

The Alabama law, signed by Republican Governor Kay Ivey last week, virtually outlaws all abortions except when necessary to prevent serious health problems for the woman. It includes no exceptions for cases of rape and incest. If it were to take effect, all doctors and medical specialists providing an abortion procedure or assisting in one would be subject to 99 years in prison if found guilty.

Although the restrictive law does not criminalize the pregnant person who would be receiving an abortion, it establishes a legal framework for “personhood” to be granted to a fetus, potentially making it possible for charges of child abuse or homicide to be brought against someone engaging in any activity deemed to be harmful to a human embryo after the moment of conception.

The barbaric law has been met with an immense backlash from workers and youth throughout the country.

On Sunday, demonstrations and marches opposing the new ban took place in Alabama, scattered across the entire state. By most estimates, several thousand people collectively attended these protests, with the largest crowds gathering in Montgomery, Birmingham, Mobile and Huntsville.

Alabama is a state in which protests have been rare in recent times, with no mass upheavals taking shape over the last 30 years. The residents of Alabama are generally portrayed in the capitalist media as conservative. The turnout at these protests came as somewhat of a surprise to those involved in their

organization, making them all the more significant.

“We never planned for it to be this big,” Megan Skipper, one of the organizers of the rally in Montgomery, told AL.com. “But I think this size shows us that people are mad” and that “abortion rights are human rights and that’s what we want.”

In Birmingham, Alabama, a crowd of 2,000 joined the “March for Reproductive Freedom,” which began and ended in Kelly Ingram Park and included a rally. Chants during the march included the slogans, “My body, my choice!” and “My right, my voice!” which were chanted in succession.

The crowd in Montgomery, the state capital, gathered outside of the building that houses the state’s legislature. The protest rally was addressed by speakers from the American Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood, Yellowhammer Fund and other organizations, as well as individuals sharing their personal experiences with abortion.

Carrying an orange sign with a coat hanger and the caption “No Never Again,” 69-year-old Deborah Hall of Montgomery told NBC News that she remembers life before *Roe v. Wade* and can’t believe the push to return there. “I had friends who had illegal abortions and barely survived,” said Hall.

Attendees of the rallies on Sunday showed particular outrage over the new law’s criminalizing of abortions sought by victims of rape, a stipulation that had been removed from the original draft of the bill during the second round of congressional debate. A woman at the rally in front of the steps of the Capitol building in Montgomery came up to the podium out of the crowd to tell her story of how she was raped at the age of 18 and impregnated. At that time, she made the choice to receive an abortion.

The ban on abortion is also understood by the

population at large to be an attack on the poorer layers of society, as those with the means to do so will seek abortions outside of Alabama. Ultimately, this law would force working class people to seek unsafe abortions in inadequately equipped back-alley facilities.

The crowd of protesters in Kansas City, Missouri, where a similar bill has been signed into law, surrounded the Country Club Plaza in the city's central district and boasted over 3,000 people, according to some press reports.

A local radio station in Kansas City, KCUR-89.3, noted that protesters on Sunday said that the bill in Missouri violates federal protections for abortions, established by the *Roe v. Wade* US Supreme Court decision of 1973, and that it would lead to women getting unsafe abortions.

Four states had already passed anti-abortion legislation earlier this year, prior to the draconian ban which was passed in Alabama. Dubbed "heartbeat bills," laws in Mississippi, Kentucky, Ohio and Georgia outlaw abortion after the first six to eight weeks of a pregnancy, the time at which a fetal heartbeat can be detected by most instruments used in hospitals to monitor pregnancies. The law passed in Alabama is the most draconian to date, effectively banning abortions after the moment of conception.

The passage of anti-abortion legislation is a clear and explicit nod of solidarity to right-wing Christian fundamentalism. After signing Alabama's anti-abortion bill into law, Governor Ivey gave a salute to the bill's supporters, saying, "This legislation stands as a powerful testament to Alabamians' deeply held belief that every life is precious and that every life is a sacred gift from God."

This is a flagrant violation of the principle of separation of church and state which is outlined in the US Constitution. The unconstitutional character of the new law was a point of grievance for protesters on Sunday. Anna Belle May, 20, who came from the rural city of Prattville, Alabama, to attend the demonstration in Montgomery, told a local newspaper that "there's separation of church and state for a reason, and we're bringing the church into the Legislature."

Mike DeWine, the Republican Governor of Ohio, said that by signing that state's new anti-abortion bill the Ohio Legislature was simply "making a good-faith argument for modification; a reversal of existing legal

precedent" and that "the United States Supreme Court will ultimately make a decision [on the bill's Constitutionality]."



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