

As thousands rally in defense of democratic rights

Democrats attempt to channel abortion rights protests into a blind alley

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Thousands of demonstrators in over 300 cities marched Saturday in support of the basic democratic right of women to obtain an abortion. The protests were in response to the May 2 leak of the Supreme Court draft decision confirming that the right-wing majority on the court is set to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which declared state laws banning abortion were unconstitutional.

Most of the rallies were held under the auspices of the “Bans Off Our Bodies” group, which included liberal organizations such as Women’s March, MoveOn and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

The rallies drew thousands of attendees, with the two largest, in New York City and in Washington D.C., each drawing an estimated 20,000 participants.

Thousands more attended rallies held Austin and Houston, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Fort Myers and Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Boise, Idaho; Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and Seattle among other cities.

Estimates from the Guttmacher Institute estimate that at least 26 states, including Idaho, would be “certain or likely” to ban abortion when *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. This would effectively outlaw the right to an abortion for over 36 million people, according to Planned Parenthood. In anticipation of the overturning of the 1973 court decision, within the last year Republican-led states such as Florida, Arizona, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Idaho, Wyoming, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas have passed legislation or signed into law bills that would ban abortions, in some cases as soon as six weeks, well before most women would even know they are pregnant.

These reactionary measures, appealing to the Christian-fascist base of the Republican Party, are deeply unpopular. In addition to the thousands who marched over the weekend in opposition to the imminent Supreme Court decision, an NBC News opinion poll conducted earlier this month found that 60 percent of those surveyed agreed that abortion should “always” or “most of the time” be legal, while only 5 percent said the medical procedure should be “illegal, without any exceptions.”

While there is massive support in the working class for this basic democratic right, for the second weekend in a row, Democratic Party-affiliated organizations, politicians and their appendages in the trade union bureaucracy, dominated the protests. This is part of an ongoing effort to channel the mass opposition to the unpopular court decision behind the Democrats and the thoroughly bankrupt perspective that voting for “pro-choice” Democrats in November would protect the right to an abortion.

What a fraud! The same party that has been unwilling and unable in the last 50 years to codify *Roe v. Wade* expects workers and youth to believe that *this time*, they will do something.

Never mind that Democrats currently control Congress and the White House. If they truly regarded abortion rights as a life-and-death matter, the Democrats could eliminate the anti-democratic filibuster rule and pass legislation tomorrow guaranteeing a woman’s right to choose.

Speakers at the rallies refused to draw the connection between the attack on abortion rights and the broader attack on the democratic rights of the entire population, including the Republicans’ failed coup of January 6. The

Democrats, servants of the same oligarchy as their fascistic “Republican colleagues,” seek to conceal the class content of the attacks on democratic rights, including the right to abortion, limiting their appeals to identity politics, blaming white men or all men or “patriarchy,” rather than the capitalist system.

The Democratic speakers never dared try to explain how they could tell the abortion rights supporters that their strategy must center on voting out the dastardly Republicans, while seemingly every week, President Biden calls for a “strong Republican Party,” and the Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi campaigns for anti-abortion Democrats like Texas Representative Henry Cuellar.

While the thousands who marched over the weekend sincerely want to defend the right to abortion and other democratic rights, the bankrupt perspective espoused by the speakers and organizers is a certain road to defeat. This rotten perspective was exemplified at the Washington D.C. rally, whose featured speakers included Janeese Lewis George, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and Democratic member of the D.C. City Council.

After identifying herself as a member of the DSA, George said the Democratic Party’s failure to codify the legal right to an abortion nearly 50 years after *Roe v. Wade* was because District of Columbia was not a state and there were not enough “black, brown, indigenous and disabled people in the US Senate.” Serving as a vote hustler for the Democrats, George told attendees: “We have to make sure we have a super-majority in Congress and in the Senate. We need progressive Democrats in every seat in Congress. We need you to vote.”

At the same rally, Mary Kay Henry, international president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and April Verrett, president of SEIU Local 2015 in California, also spoke.

The SEIU sold out nurses at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles this month, at Cabell-Huntington Hospital (CHH) in Huntington, West Virginia last December, as well as the Kaiser nurses and engineers strike in Northern California that same month. In December 2020 the SEIU Local 121RN, in coordination with the Hospital Corporation of American in Southern California, pushed throughout a rotten contract after a 92 percent strike vote.

Similar pathetic calls to vote for Democrats made in coordination with support from the labor bureaucracy were observed at the other rallies. At the Austin rally, which began at the Texas AFL-CIO headquarters, Democratic Rep. Lloyd Doggett told the crowd, “We can’t just win this battle at the court house, we have to win it at the ballot box.” Likewise at the Los Angeles rally on Saturday, Democratic Representative and mayoral candidate Karen Bass told the crowd, “We will fight. We will vote.”

The defense of democratic rights, including the right to an abortion, will not be preserved through “the ballot box,” but only through the political mobilization of the working class, against both capitalist parties and the entire framework of capitalist politics.

More than 16 months after Trump’s failed coup it is clear the Democrats will not serve as bulwark against the increasingly fascistic Republican Party but will instead serve as its accomplice.

The most ominous signal of this danger was the presence of fascist counterprotesters at several of the rallies, including those who participated in some fashion in the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

In Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday, armed and masked III Percenter fascists, wielding semi-automatic rifles, menaced protesters and stalked the perimeter of the march while police looked on and did nothing. At a Sunday rally held at the Arizona State Capitol, over a dozen Proud Boys militia members joined anti-abortion counter-protesters. At the rally in Nashville, Tennessee, on Saturday roughly a dozen members of the neo-Nazi America First group heckled abortion rights demonstrators.



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