

# Abortion rights protests encounter police, right-wing violence

By our reporters  
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Tens of thousands continued to protest over the weekend in cities from coast to coast in the United States, denouncing the Supreme Court's decision announced Friday morning to overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision and allow state governments to outlaw abortion.

Some 15 states with "trigger laws" are expected to have legal bans on abortion in effect by early July, and a total of 26 states are at some stage of a legislative process to follow suit. Only the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states, the West Coast, and Illinois and Minnesota in the Midwest have robust protection of abortion rights in place.

States like Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Arizona and Montana are in legally uncertain conditions.

One of the largest demonstrations took place Friday night in Phoenix, as some 8,000 people marched and rallied outside the Arizona state Capitol. As they chanted their opposition to the Supreme Court's reactionary and anti-democratic action, the demonstrators were suddenly hit by teargas fired by police from inside the Capitol building itself.

Republican Senate President Karen Fann issued a news release describing the peaceful protest as an insurrection aimed at overthrowing the state government. The state Senate was in session engaged in approving a major expansion of charter schools to undermine public education while the rally outside was taking place.

State police said in a statement that what "began as a peaceful protest evolved into anarchical and criminal actions by masses of [a] splinter group" (!). They said gas was fired "after protesters attempted to break the glass" separating the protest from the Capitol building.

Despite these claims, state police made no arrests,

and there were no injuries reported. Reporters on the scene found no broken glass. The only apparent violence was the tear-gassing itself, which not only dispersed the protesters but disrupted the state Senate proceeding, as legislators fled their chambers and took refuge in the basement as gas filled the halls.

Democrats in the legislature issued a mewling statement condemning "violence in all forms," noting the purported attack on the legislature, but saying that Republican lawmakers were "weaponizing this moment to deflect from the actions of January 6th." They also noted that they have voted to give state police a large pay raise.

Protests continued Saturday in dozens of cities, including New York City, Philadelphia, Washington D.C.; Norfolk, Virginia; Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham and four other cities in Alabama; New Orleans, Louisiana; Tucson, Arizona; across California, and in Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington.

In Providence, Rhode Island, a speaker at an abortion rights rally, Jennifer Rourke, a black woman who is running for a state Senate seat as a Democrat, was assaulted by her Republican opponent, Jeann Lugo, a white male police officer who was off duty. A group of anti-abortion protesters had approached the much larger group of abortion rights demonstrators and fighting broke out, which Rourke was seeking to break up.

Lugo has been suspended by the police department pending an investigation, and he announced that he was also suspending his election campaign.

In Atlanta, a group of fascist Proud Boys trailed Saturday's abortion rights demonstration but were blocked from getting to the protesters by a group of veterans who called themselves the "Wall of Vets," forming a barrier to protect the demonstration.

Friday night in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the driver of a

pickup truck engaged in a verbal conflict with abortion rights supporters, then accelerated his vehicle and struck one of the protesters, who had to be taken to the hospital for evaluation. The police have made no arrest and filed no charges.

Outside New Orleans, WSWS reporters spoke with people demonstrating at the St. Tammany Parish Justice Center in the suburb of Covington.

Most abortions were banned in Louisiana on Friday following the Supreme Court ruling, when so-called “trigger laws” went into immediate effect. The two anti-abortion bills that went into effect were signed by Democratic governors, current Governor John Bel Edwards and a previous governor, Kathleen Blanco.

A number of young people at the demonstration spoke about their thoughts on the ruling, its relation to broader political issues and the role of the Democratic Party.

Riley said, “I feel like we’re going so far back in history. This is something women already fought for, and the fact that so many are here today having to fight again is awful. It’s awful to see that people have to fight for their rights again.”

Kylie added, “It’s terrible that we’re repeating something that is already so far gone. We have voices that deserve to be heard, and as women in America it’s not fair for our choices to be taken away.”

Asked about the Democratic Party, Riley and Kylie agreed that “they’re not doing enough. They could have done a lot more, and they’re not changing anything. They’re as responsible as Republicans because they’re not showing our voices.”

Two other young demonstrators also spoke about the Democratic Party. One said, “I think that the Democratic Party is not doing enough to support people and their endeavors to combat capitalism, and the brutality of the government is in turn backing the Republicans and all the very right-wing people and taking away people’s rights.”

Kyle added, “I think the Democratic Party is just another right-wing party no matter how much they want to disguise themselves as a liberal and social justice. I think it’s just as bad.”

Between 300 and 400 demonstrated in Norfolk, Virginia on Sunday at a rally called by a reproductive rights group. While the organizers and speakers tried to funnel mass anger into support for the Democratic

Party, a WSWS reporting team spoke with several youth and professionals who tended to draw more far-reaching conclusions from Friday’s gutting of abortion rights.

Kaylani, a family therapist, told the WSWS , “Unfortunately, with this ruling it’s only the beginning, only the first step. There are going to be so many precedents they will try to overturn; we are now going so far backwards.” She added, “There is a right and a wrong in this situation. You don’t get to put your opinions on someone else’s body; you don’t get to choose for them.” Michaela interjected, “or who they love, who they marry.”

Cassandra and Savannah, two college students at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, came to the rally to oppose the attack on abortion. Savannah said, “I am a gay woman who uses birth control so I’m not cool with any of this. I am out here trying to protest, to make content on TikTok, anything to raise awareness about this. Honestly, the people representing us right now are not doing their job. Democrats knew that *Roe v. Wade* has been targeted for a long time, and they really have not been doing their job.”



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