

As state abortion bans take effect, Democrats confine their response to election appeals

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Within days of the reactionary Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and allow states to outlaw abortion, six states have done so, either through trigger laws that took effect automatically, or through certification of the high court action by state officials which activated such laws.

According to Planned Parenthood, the states where abortion is already illegal and reproductive health clinics have ceased operating include: Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Texas, with a combined population of 50 million. Utah was blocked from similar action by a last-minute court injunction, now being appealed.

There are 15 states where the procedure is severely restricted and soon to be entirely illegal: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, with a combined population of 93 million.

In four more states, Kansas, Nebraska, Michigan and North Carolina, the legal status of abortion depends on impending court decisions or, in Kansas, a statewide referendum in August. Some 26 million people live in these four states, bringing the total number of people living in states where abortion is banned or under immediate threat to 171 million, just over half the US population.

That leaves 24 states where the status of abortion remains on fairly strong legal foundations: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington.

Geographically, the division of the United States is quite stark. Abortion is likely to remain legal in the northeast and Middle Atlantic states, and along the entire

West Coast and portions of the Mountain states, and in a few spots in the Midwest. Across the entire South, most of the Midwest, and some of the Mountain states, it will be savagely proscribed.

While the right to this vital medical procedure and fundamental democratic right is being taken away from women immediately, the response of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party as a whole is to view the issue purely as an opportunity to reverse their dismal poll numbers and mobilize support in the upcoming midterm elections on November 8.

Biden made a perfunctory statement Friday in response to the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. White House sources told the press on background that the speech had already been written last month after the draft of the controlling opinion by Justice Samuel Alito was leaked to the media. It was only "tweaked" in response to the handing down of the actual ruling.

The administration has convened a series of meetings to discuss what practical response it could carry out to aid women seeking abortions in the affected states, but nothing has happened so far except a joint letter from Attorney General Merrick Garland, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, reminding insurance companies that they must continue providing coverage of contraceptive services under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

Some 30 Democratic senators sent a letter to the White House over the weekend, urging Biden to take "bold action" and use "every step available to your Administration, across federal agencies, to help women access abortions and other reproductive health care." Diplomatically, however, they did not actually spell out a single concrete action that Biden should take.

The "left" wing of the Democratic Party has seized on the abortion issue as a means of voter mobilization in

November, and rehabilitating the Biden administration in the eyes of millions who voted for Biden in 2020 to oust the hated Trump, but have seen the Democrats abandon their promises of significant social improvements and reforms. This includes such issues as voting rights, relief for student debt, serious protection against evictions and foreclosures, and a real fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been entirely abandoned.

Speaking on separate Sunday television interview programs, two leading lights of the left liberals, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Representative Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez of New York said they expected aggressive action by the Biden administration well before the November election.

On the ABC program “This Week,” Warren called for sending resources to states like New Mexico, which border on the area where abortion is now illegal and will see an influx of women from those states seeking access. “It also means asking the president of the United States to make abortion as available as possible with the tools he has, including medication abortion, including using federal lands as a place where abortions can occur,” she said.

But, she then continued, it was necessary to be “focused like a laser on the election in November. And we get two more senators on the Democratic side, two senators who are willing to protect access to abortion and get rid of the filibuster so that we can pass it.” This would increase the number of Democrats willing to overturn the filibuster to the necessary 50, since currently there are two Democrats, Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, who oppose this.

Warren, however, like most Democrats, fully expects to lose control of the House of Representatives, which would end any prospect of passing abortion rights legislation, whatever happens in the Senate. And Biden is by no means committed to supporting an overturn of the filibuster.

Instead, she offered a pie-in-the-sky proposal to add more justices to the Supreme Court, from the current nine, so that Biden can nominate a group of liberals to outvote the current ultra-right majority. There is again no prospect of passing this through the closely divided Senate, and White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre confirmed again Sunday that Biden opposes any change in the number of justices on the high court.

Ocasio-Cortez, appearing on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” made the same proposals as Warren but with a bit more radical rhetoric. She backed Warren’s proposal to “explore opening health care clinics on federal lands in

red states in order to help people access the health care and abortion services that they need.” This proposal would be barred by the Hyde Amendment, a reactionary measure enacted in 1976 that prohibits spending federal dollars on abortion services, which successive Democratic-controlled congresses have refused ever to repeal.

Ocasio-Cortez went beyond Warren’s proposal to expand the court, pointing to “a crisis of legitimacy” on the court. “We have a Supreme Court justice whose wife participated in January 6th and who used his seat to vote against providing documents that potentially led to evidence of such to investigators in Congress. This is a crisis of legitimacy and President Biden must address that.”

She also suggested that several of the justices in the ultra-right majority had lied during their Senate confirmation hearings, when they denied any fixed intention to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and regarded the 50-year-old ruling as “settled precedent.” Lying at such a hearing is an impeachable offense, she said.

Without mentioning Biden by name, Ocasio-Cortez criticized what she called “nostalgia” for a past era of bipartisan cooperation. “You hear this very often when you hear certain Democrats say that they wished for a strong Republican Party. But the fact of the matter is that we have a new and very different Republican Party” that was opposed to “very, very critical underpinnings of our democracy.”

The congresswoman did not use the word “fascist,” but this was clearly the implication.

Yet for all this verbal radicalism, Ocasio-Cortez proposed nothing more to fight the threat of fascism and dictatorship than a vote for the Democratic Party in November. Both she and Senator Warren were entirely silent on the intrinsic connection between the foreign policy of the Biden administration, based on war with Russia and alliance with ultra-right and fascist forces in Ukraine, and the growth of the fascist right within the United States (and for that matter in Germany, France and the other imperialist powers in the NATO alliance).

Both have voted for the record military spending, including for the war with Ukraine, proposed by the Biden White House with bipartisan backing.



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