

Biden, Democrats seek to channel outrage over abortion bans into midterm election campaigns

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Having done nothing for decades to codify the now-overturned constitutional right to abortion or stop the packing of the Supreme Court with far-right Republicans, the Democrats are seeking to exploit the court's devastating attack on democratic rights and women's health to hustle votes for the November congressional elections.

As of Friday, one week after the Supreme Court for the first time ever took away a previously established constitutional right in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, at least seven states have enacted bans on abortions, according to a *New York Times* tracker.

These states—South Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Alabama and West Virginia—have a combined population of more than 40 million.

Three more states—Utah, Louisiana and Kentucky—attempted to enact anti-abortion laws but were temporarily blocked by court orders.

There are a total of 13 states—for the most part in the South and the upper Midwest—that have laws banning abortion at six weeks or earlier, most of which will take effect in the coming weeks. An additional 11 states have laws restricting abortions from six weeks to viability (24 weeks), including Wisconsin and Indiana.

There are 20 states that protect abortion at least up to 24 weeks, for the most part the West and East Coast, New England and most mid-Atlantic states, plus Washington D.C.

There are six states with neither an active ban nor legal protection: Michigan, Utah, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and New Hampshire.

The total number of people living in states where abortion is banned or under immediate threat is over 170 million, just over half of the US population.

At his press conference Thursday following the NATO summit meeting in Spain, President Joe Biden indicated that his primary concern following the *Dobbs* decision is its impact on the ability of Washington to maintain NATO's unity in conducting the widening war against Russia in Ukraine and preparing for war against China.

A reporter cited the anti-abortion ruling, which provoked denunciations from key NATO allies, as well as the mass shootings in New York and Texas, record inflation and polls showing widespread popular discontent, and questioned Biden's claim that "America is back" as the undisputed world leader.

Biden responded by denying any weakening of US prestige, but added, "The one thing that has been destabilizing is the outrageous behavior of the Supreme Court on overruling not only *Roe v. Wade*, but essentially challenging the right to privacy.

"We've been a leader in the world in terms of personal rights and privacy rights, and it is a mistake, in my view, for the Supreme Court to do what it did."

In other words, the court's ruling is a blow to American imperialism's "soft power" as it carries out the opening phase of a war to redivide the world, beginning with the dismemberment and effective colonization of Russia.

Pressed by other reporters on his response to the court ruling, Biden said he would push for legislation to codify a federal right to abortion and, for the first time, said he would support exempting the issue from the Senate filibuster rule, which effectively requires 60 votes to get bills passed.

Before ending the press conference, he said the answer to the Supreme Court's "significant mistake" on abortion rights was to "show up and vote. Vote in the off-year and vote, vote, vote. That's how we'll change it."

Biden's shift on the filibuster will have no practical

effect, as he well knows, since at least two Senate Democrats—Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema—have made clear they oppose any change in the anti-democratic procedure, depriving the Democrats of the 50 votes they need in the evenly divided chamber to change the rule.

Soon after Biden's press conference, Sinema's office released a statement reiterating that the senator "is still opposed to gutting the filibuster on any topic, including reproductive rights."

This did not prevent Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from hailing Biden. "Now we're talking!" she tweeted. Nina Turner, the national co-chair of the Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential election campaign, wrote, "This is good news."

On Friday, Biden hosted an on-line meeting with nine Democratic governors, including those in states such as New York, Illinois, Colorado, New Mexico and North Carolina that are already experiencing an influx of desperate women from states with abortion bans.

There have been calls from some Democrats for Biden to declare a national health emergency and issue an executive order permitting federal properties such as military bases and Veterans Administration hospitals in states with anti-abortion laws to perform the procedure. Biden has rejected any such measures, fearful of losing Republican support for his war policy.

To date, the only action taken by the administration, beyond pledging to oppose Republican state laws criminalizing travel to other states for abortion services and defending access to abortion medications via the mail, is the announcement of a paltry \$3 million in Health and Human Services funding to increase training and technical assistance for family planning providers.

Biden admitted that he did not have 50 Democratic votes in the Senate to alter the filibuster rule and warned that the Republicans would pass a nationwide ban on abortion if they gained control of Congress in the November 8 elections.

But aside from tweaking his rhetoric, calling the Supreme Court "extremist," he proposed nothing new.

Some Democrats, such as Senator Elizabeth Warren, are pushing the notion that abortion rights can be saved by electing two additional Democrats to the Senate in the fall. This is farcical.

The Democratic Party—a party of the American capitalist corporate/financial oligarchy and the US war machine—is incapable of defending democratic rights under conditions of expanding imperialist war, mass death as a result of the "herd immunity" pandemic policies of

both parties, staggering levels of social inequality and cuts in real wages and social services.

Since the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973, the Democratic Party has controlled both houses of Congress for a combined total of 22 years, including the current Congress.

It has controlled both houses of Congress plus the White House for 10 years: All four years of the Carter administration, the first two years of the Clinton presidency, the first two years of the Obama White House (including a filibuster-proof super-majority of 60 to 40) and the first two years of Biden.

It has never seriously attempted to pass legislation codifying *Roe v. Wade*. Instead, it has allowed the Republican right to steadily erode abortion rights, including the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which prohibits spending federal dollars on abortion services. Biden supported the reactionary anti-working class measure until June 2019, when he reversed his position in order to secure the Democratic presidential nomination.

The same can be said in regard to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Since the Supreme Court struck down the key enforcement provisions of the act in 2013 during the Obama administration, the Democrats have never seriously sought to enact legislation reversing the court's action.

The Democrats will do nothing to defend abortion rights, just as they refuse to expose the massive conspiracy that led to the January 6 coup or hold accountable all those responsible for plotting to install a fascist dictatorship headed by Trump.

The fight for the right to abortion, as with all other democratic rights, must be conducted as a fight for the political independence and mass mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program.



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