

Women's Rights Under Attack in Texas

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Laurie Green, LAWCHA member, sends us an action alert and open letter LAWCHA members can sign onto about recent attacks on women's rights in Texas.

The nation stands at the edge of a historic reversal. Hard won gains of the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s are about to be turned back with devastating results for women across the country. Abortion, already a barely accessible right for most women, is now being made extinct as conservative politicians attempt to press their advantage in certain states in opportunistic fashion.

But the problem we face is deeper. In Texas, the legislature has used every legal (and some illegal) trick in the book to make sure that the pro-choice majority is not heard. The current legislation under consideration represents some of the most draconian limits on abortion rights ever. And instead of allowing normal democratic procedures to resolve the issue, the legislature has relied on a rigged process to force the bill through. A few examples are worth mention: every procedural objection that was made to Wendy Davis's historic filibuster; the refusal to hold state-wide hearings to allow affected communities to testify about the consequences of the legislation; the intentional misreporting of how many people testified in opposition to the legislation; the years of gerrymandering which make it nearly impossible for the legislature to reflect the real wishes of the population; the organizing of "special sessions" to push through legislation.

The current legislation is too important to allow these deficits in the democratic process to go unchallenged. The bills in Texas would close down the overwhelming majority of clinics which provide abortions and thereby eliminate all of the ancillary services those clinics also provide - STD testing, family planning, health care. That some of these clinics are also the only places where low-income, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals are able to get health services means that this legislation will disproportionately impact the most vulnerable members of society.

We believe that the legislative process is stacked against those of us who believe that abortion rights are a necessary part of a woman's ability to control her own body and make decisions about her own health. As a result, it now becomes necessary to take action outside of the legislative process. We firmly believe that if we were to stand up and be counted, the pro-choice forces in this country will outnumber the forces of reaction. It is in this vein that we call on all people who believe in a woman's right to choose to stand up and be counted.

We propose that marches and rallies be organized in every city in Texas on July 15th in order to show just how deep the pro-choice sentiment actually runs. In Austin, we will be rallying at 8 pm at the Texas Capitol. But as these attacks against choice are not limited to Texas, we invite all those who stand for choice to join us in a national day of solidarity on July 15th. We believe it is possible to win back our rights, but only if we take a stand in the way that people have been standing for their rights in Brazil, Egypt, and Greece: by understanding that popular protest has the ability to change what a narrow minority of people impose under the fiction of legality.

Signed,

- Tithi Bhattacharya, Associate Professor of History, Purdue University
- Tiffani Bishop, GetEqual TX Central Texas Lead
- Judith Butler, Maxine Elliot Professor of Rhetoric, University of California, Berkeley
- Mia Carter, Associate Professor of English, University of Texas, Austin
- Dana Cloud, associate professor of Communication, University of Texas, Austin
- Bug Davidson, Director of Homoscope Film Festival
- Montserrat Garibay, National Board Certified Teacher, Vice President for LULAC Council 4859, Austin, Texas
- Susan Sage Heinzelman, Associate Professor of Women's & Gender Studies, University of Texas, Austin
- Rosemary Hennessy, Director, Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, Rice University
- Jim Hightower, editor of The Hightower Lowdown, former TX Agriculture Commissioner
- Madeline Hsu, Associate Professor of History, University of Texas, Austin
- Alison Jaggar, Professor of Distinction, Philosophy and Women and Gender Studies

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- Deepa Kumar, Associate Professor of Communication, Rutgers University
- Holly Lewis, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Texas State University
- Sharmila Rudrappa, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Texas, Austin
- Cynthia Valadez-Mata, Jr. , League of United Latin American Citizens – District 7 Director
- Snehal Shingavi, Assistant Professor of English, University of Texas, Austin
- Lindsay Smith, Houston Feminist Movement
- Keeanga Yahmatta-Taylor, author of Rats, Riots and Revolution: Black Housing in the 1960s, Texas native
- Lijun Yuan, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Texas State University, San Marcos
- Dave Zirin, Sports Editor, The Nation Magazine
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