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Abortion rights advocates gather in Lowell, deliver a warning to anti-choice politicians



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UPDATED: July 1, 2024 at 10:33 AM EDT

Dozens of reproductive rights activists gathered in Lowell on Sunday to hear from elected representatives and advocates on the path forward in a post-Roe world.

State Rep. Vanna Howard picked up a microphone, and along with other state and city elected officials, explained how half of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Republicans who put them there had made a terrible mistake by tossing out nearly five decades of court precedent and overturning Roe v. Wade.

“Are you enraged?” Howard asked the crowd. “What are you going to do about it?”

“Vote!” they answered in unison.

Howard, joined by state Rep. Rodney Elliott, Lowell Mayor Daniel Rourke and several members of the City Council, said that after the fall of Roe she and more than 300 others gathered in that same spot to call for change.

In time since, she and other speakers said, the Supreme Court has chosen to punt on whether a law in Idaho can prevent women from receiving abortions as emergency care, and gutted the administrative state’s ability to effectively regulate drugs, the environment or public health absent express authorization from Congress.

Rourke said that the court’s decision was “wrong” and “unfair” and said that the women in our communities deserve “undying” support for the decisions they make regarding their own health. He thanked attendees, saying elected officials can only do so much on their own, but “with people, with a crowd and cause, anything is possible.”

Nina Lee, manager of community outreach at Planned Parenthood League of MA, said that in the time since Roe was overturned, 21 U.S. states have banned or restricted access to abortion, even in cases of rape or incest. As a consequence, one in five people who need an abortion have to leave their home state to get necessary care. Many are coming here, she said.

“Planned Parenthood health centers in Massachusetts have seen patients from 15 different restrictive states in the last year,” she said.

Jamie Klufts, speaking on behalf of the Healthy Youth Coalition, had a straightforward message for the gathered protestors.

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“If you don’t vote, you can’t complain,” she said.

Originally Published: June 30, 2024 at 8:28 PM EDT

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