

Hundreds rally at Utah Capitol to protest abortion bans in the state and around the country

By Dan Harrie
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More than 300 people joined a rally at the Utah Capitol on Tuesday as part of a national movement to oppose abortion bans passed by state legislatures attempting to challenge the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade*.

“We must stop these bans; we must stop the mayhem,” Karrie Galloway, Planned Parenthood of Utah executive director, said to loud cheers.

The enthusiastic crowd — filled with young people, mostly women and girls — whooped and raised homemade signs with sayings such as “Abortion saves lives,” “My body, my choice” and “Keep your laws out of my uterus.”

States have passed 16 abortion restrictions or bans so far this year — including two in Utah. Several states have passed laws that, if upheld by courts, would essentially outlaw abortions entirely.

“These bans are not about the unborn,” Rep. Angela Romero, D-Salt Lake City, said. “These bans are about guiltting women into submission.”

Romero recounted how Republican colleagues during discussion of Utah’s bans on aborting a fetus after 18 weeks or solely because of a Down syndrome diagnosis used “dehumanizing” language. One said “a womb is not a tomb,” she said. Another compared the time a woman would be allowed to obtain an abortion under the 18-week law to an NFL season.

The lawmakers pushing these restrictions are “pro-birth; they’re not pro-life,” she said, pointing to the lack of child care for working women and the lack of access to health care.

Katie Matheson, of the left-leaning Alliance for a Better Utah, said state lawmakers often like to tout innovative approaches to problems as “the Utah way.”

But “telling a woman she is not in control of her body is not the Utah way,” Matheson said, denouncing the state’s abortion bills as “political, manipulative and fear-based.”

Deanna Holland, carrying signs saying “Fetus = baby” and “Love them both” attended the rally as a representative of Pro-Life Utah.

She said several young women stood in front of her and raised their signs to block hers.

“My problem with these types of events is the other life in the equation is ignored,” Holland said. “They’re pushing the rhetoric that just the woman matters, so it dehumanizes that unborn child to the point it’s difficult to find common ground.”

Off to the side of the speaker’s microphone Tuesday, stood two women dressed as characters from “The Handmaid’s Tale,” in red robes and white cowls. One held a sign saying, “I am not your incubator.”

Saundra Stokes, director of community engagement for Planned Parenthood Association of Utah, urged rally attendees to stay active in the movement, to contact their lawmakers and to vote.

“Let’s organize our outrage,” Stokes said.