

Thousands rally across U.S. to safeguard abortion rights

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The nationwide demonstrations over the weekend are a response to a leaked draft legal opinion showing the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative majority is considering overturning *Roe v Wade*, a landmark 1973 ruling that guarantees abortion access nationwide.

“We’re done with attacks on abortion. We’re marching TODAY to make our voices loud and clear,” read a tweet from the Women’s March, one of the groups behind Saturday’s “Bans Off Our Bodies” protests.

Protesters gathered in New York, Washington-DC, Los Angeles, Austin and Chicago, as well as at hundreds of smaller events across the country. All in all, more than 380 events are scheduled from Maine to Hawaii, organisers said.

“This Saturday, our elected leaders hear us, Supreme Court justices hear us, companies who’ve funded anti-abortion interests hear us,” Sonja Spoo, director of reproductive rights campaigns at the advocacy organisation UltraViolet, said in a statement. “We will be prepared to meet the moment, whether that’s rallying in the streets, petitioning state officials – whatever it takes,” she said.

The leak of the draft opinion has ignited fury about the potential rollback of abortion rights in the US before November’s key midterm elections, when control of both congressional chambers are at stake.

Democrats have pushed to codify abortion rights into federal law in a bid to pin down Republicans on the deeply divisive issue ahead of the crucial elections.

The House-passed Women’s Health Protection Act would assure healthcare professionals have the right to provide abortions and that patients have the right to receive them. But Republicans and one Democrat in the US Senate scuttled the effort to advance the measure earlier this week.

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