

Wisconsinites protest threat to overturn Roe v. Wade

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"I don't think it's a matter of there's less approval and support in small towns, I think it's more you just feel like you can't say anything." – Zoe Thayer on prochoice sentiment in Sauk City.

MADISON - Hundreds of protesters filled the western corner of the Capitol lawn on Saturday advocating for abortion rights in light of the leaked Supreme Court draft decision that would overturn Roe v. Wade.

Among them, one woman, who asked not to be named, held a sign showing a black-and-white photograph of her grandmother. With nine children at home, her grandmother had sought an illegal abortion in the early 1920's and died. Her granddaughter's sign read, "She had a heartbeat too."

"The consequences of overturning Roe v Wade cannot be overstated," Gov. Tony Evers told the crowd. "I'm old enough to remember the way things were before *Roe*. And it wasn't pretty. That's why I'm here to tell you today that we cannot go back. We can never go back."

Evers addressed the crowd in a pink Planned Parenthood t-shirt and touted his vetoes of several bills passed by the Republican-led Legislature that would have restricted abortion access.

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"I am a proud defender of reproductive rights," Evers said. "I will never stop fighting to make sure you have a right to make your own reproductive health care decision without the interference of politicians."

It was hardly surprising to hear such sentiments expressed at a rally in Madison. But a similar message was echoed by protesters in more conservative Sauk City.

"If women don't have access to reproductive health measures, regardless of what you call them, they will die," Terry Wellman said. "Their children will die. Their other children will be orphaned. Their families will be heartbroken. This is ridiculous."

"To us, abortion is just part of women's health," Wellman's husband Chuck added. "If they need it, they need it. And we're not gonna watch people die just because of an ectopic pregnancy that no one will help them with. That's outrageous."

The Wellmans, who live in Illinois but have a summer home near Sauk City, were two of about 60 protestors who gathered Saturday to line the Highway 12 bridge over the Wisconsin River, the main thoroughfare in and out of Sauk City. It was one of several protests in smaller communities across Wisconsin.

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