



FEATURED

Protesters show support for abortion rights

BAILEY SCHULZ Lincoln Journal Star Feb 11, 2017

Protesters supporting abortion rights walk from the state capitol to Sen. Ben Sasse's office Saturday.

Protesters gathered in front of the Nebraska State Capitol on Saturday afternoon, showing their support for abortion rights with speeches, signs and chants.



JAMES WOOLDRIDGE, Journal Star

Protesters supporting abortion rights walk toward Sen. Ben Sasse's office Saturday from the state capitol.

The protest, which was held as a counter-demonstration to the hundreds of anti-abortion rallies that took place at Planned Parenthood clinics across the United States on Saturday, drew about 100 people.

Speakers, including march organizer Wendy Hines, told their stories.

The retired University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor spoke to the crowd about her personal experiences with Planned Parenthood.

Hines said she got pregnant for the first time while in graduate school.

“I knew that if I had the baby, I wouldn’t be able to give it up,” she said.

Hines didn’t want to drop out of school, so she had an abortion at a Planned Parenthood clinic.

“I graduated. I became a professor at UNL,” she said. “And many young women, because of me, went to get Ph.D.s in mathematics. If I hadn’t had that abortion, I would never have had the opportunity to influence those young women ... I wouldn’t have the son that I have now.”

Hines recognized Planned Parenthood for providing her a safe way to terminate the pregnancy.

“Imagine if I couldn’t have had an abortion at Planned Parenthood. I’d have had to have an abortion in a back alley,” she said. “... If I’d have had a back-alley abortion, who knows what would have happened to me.”

About 15 members of the self-described "neo suffragist" group Betsy Riot wore red dresses and white bonnets with red lace covering their faces.

One member, carrying a giant coat hanger, said the group’s appearance was meant to imitate the women in Margaret Atwood’s speculative fiction, “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

The woman, who wished to go by the name Betsy, said the novel depicts women in a “religious, oppressive government in a dystopian future, who were forced to be breeders.”

Betsy said the coat hanger was a message to groups such as the handful of anti-abortion protesters standing across the street. That group started its own chants and held large signs with images of aborted fetuses.

“We often see images like the one across the street, but the reality is, when we don’t have safe, accessible abortions for women, it leads to mangled, dead women,” she said. “That’s what we’re talking about today. That women's lives are human lives.”

William Stewart-Starks, one of the anti-abortion protesters, said he came to “represent the voiceless.”

“All children are gifts from God,” he said. “If people don’t want to have their children, there’s many options for them.”

Abortion rights protesters later marched to Sen. Ben Sasse’s office, chanting phrases such as “My body, my choice” and “Keep your rosaries off our ovaries.” Sasse spoke at last month's anti-abortion Walk for Life.