

# Students at more than 50 schools, universities stage reproductive justice protests

The group behind the protests will send letters to Congress and Biden.

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Selected image conveys activist message, supportive tone



**What's next for abortion rights in America?** A leaked draft opinion indicates the Supreme Court could rule in favor of a Mississippi law and overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the coming months, leading to a country-wide overhaul of abortion rights.

Connection to larger movement

Students at more than 60 high schools and universities across at least 29 states are holding student strikes and events on Thursday to fight for reproductive justice. The self-dubbed "Day of Student Action" is organized by the Graduate Student Action Network, a group formed in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision to [overturn Roe v. Wade](#) ending federal protections for abortion rights, and the Young Democratic Socialists of America.

Strong language that appears to support student right to protest

Students plan to demand that their school step in and defend their reproductive rights and freedom of gender expression in the absence of action from elected leaders, CalTech graduate student and founder of GSAN, Rachael Kuintzle told ABC News in an interview.

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**MORE: Here's where abortion is banned 3 months after Roe v. Wade was overturned**



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GSAN was born over the summer when Kuintzle started reaching out to student leaders including grad student government leaders, union reps and advocacy club officers.

Direct quote from student leader, respectable tone + "I"

"Right after the Supreme Court decision in June, I felt really helpless and I started reaching out to grad students across the country ... emailing them, and asking if they wanted to meet together and figure out what we can do to get health into the hands of our students as soon as possible. And so what came out of that was this day of action," Kuintzle said in an interview with ABC News.

Another student group, the Young Democratic Socialists of America, was also separately running a reproductive justice group looking into how they could make a difference and so the two groups teamed up, organizing protests and events jointly, Kuintzle said.

Shows joint efforts from college students to enact change

Discussing demands,  
directly sources

GSAN plans to [send letters](#) to Congress and President Joe Biden on Thursday listing their demands.

In the group's letter to Congress, they are demanding safe, legal, and accessible abortion; gender-affirming healthcare; free contraception of all varieties; and federally mandated sex education, including standardized curriculum on sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy prevention and consent.

Appeal to Biden to enact  
change, "responsibility"

GSAN is asking Biden to declare a public health emergency over abortion to ensure that abortion pills can be provided by mail for free in all states and implement a program to mail free at-home pregnancy tests on demand to U.S. households to enable early detection of pregnancies.

The letters will be sent from the group of student leaders, but students at some campuses are also gathering signatures for petitions listing demands specific to their school.



Abortion rights activists and supporters march outside of the Austin Convention Center where the American Freedom Tour with former President Donald Trump is being held on May 14, 2022, in Austin, Texas.

Brandon Bell/Getty Images

Some of the campuses organizing protests or events Thursday include the University of Arkansas, the University of South Dakota, multiple CUNY system campuses, University of Texas at Austin, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard Law School.

Thematic frame, other events occurring

Demands discussed, school specific\*

Nikole Schneider and Danielle Galvin, students at the University of South Dakota, told ABC News they will also be fighting for health insurance, which they do not currently have. They plan to set up several booths on Thursday for voter registration, the student

health center, the school's mental health services, Planned Parenthood and a fundraising booth for a student-run group that offers free healthcare services for those without insurance.

Schneider and Galvin said being in contact with students from around the country has allowed them to feel like they are making a difference, despite initially feeling lonely and helpless after Roe was overturned.

Positive tone + direct activist quotes, narrative power

"It's definitely changed how I think that I can affect what's happening in the country, especially now, just like being a part of something bigger," Schneider said.

Galvin said it has been eye-opening to hear the support other students around the country are getting from their schools, with those students giving them advice on how to advocate for themselves with their university's administration.

Activist networks, taking the responsibility to advocate for themselves w/ admin.

"Spark" of protest

A trigger ban in South Dakota prohibits abortions entirely, "unless there is appropriate and reasonable medical judgment that performance of an abortion is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant female," according to the law.

Only quote from authority

The law, which went into effect when Roe was overturned, makes it a class 6 felony to provide abortion care in the state.

"Spark" of protest

Students at the University of Arkansas have already had a few protests since Roe was overturned, but they are hoping this day of action would give them momentum going into the midterms, specifically because of the tight restrictions on abortion in the state and attacks on transgender individuals, organizer and graduate student Katy Dupree told ABC News.

A state law in Arkansas bans all abortions except to save the life of the mother, making it a felony for anyone to perform a non-approved abortion, punishable with up to 10 years in prison.

Dupree said they are organizing a comprehensive resource fair with a voter registration booth and speakers along with their student walkout and protest.

"This organization kind of fell into my lap. And it has been a very serendipitous and beneficial kind of happenstance for me, I struggled a lot through the pandemic with figuring out if graduate school is something that I really wanted to continue to pursue. And if I was happy with what I was studying, and really found that advocating for others helped me pull myself kind of up and out," Dupree said.

Extended activist quote, showing trend of narrative given directly to organizers

The student leaders all agreed that the Oct. 6 protest is just a starting point. What started out as Kuintzle emailing students around the country has since grown into a more organized graduate student group.

"We have a structure, we voted on a name together, we meet regularly, we have rules of operation, we're over 50 grad leaders in over 30 states," Kuintzle said.

Only 59 campuses opted to publicly list their name on the GSAN website, saying they will participate in the protests, but Kuintzle said there will be events at seven other schools.

The group plans to continue organizing events and advocating for students in the future.

"We're committed to fighting for our students rights, not just in reproductive justice, but beyond. We're looking for future actions and climate justice and indigenous sovereignty, we're going to be taking some action to fight for higher stipends and better health care coverage for graduate students in the near future as well," Kuintzle said.

