

BREAKING: Democrats Fail to Make Roe v. Wade Permanent, But Won't Give Up

The Senate fell far short Wednesday in a rushed effort toward enshrining Roe v. Wade abortion access as federal law, blocked by a Republican filibuster in a blunt display of the nation's partisan divide over the landmark court decision and the limits of legislative action.

The almost party-line tally promises to be the first of several efforts in Congress to preserve the nearly 50-year-old court ruling, which declares a constitutional right to abortion services but is at serious risk of being overturned this summer by a conservative Supreme Court.

President Joe Biden called on the Congress controlled by Democrats to pass legislation to protect abortion services for millions of Americans. But his party's slim majority proved unable to overcome the filibuster led by Republicans, who have been working for decades to install conservative Supreme Court justices and end Roe v. Wade. The vote was 51-49 against proceeding, with 60 votes needed to move ahead.

"The American people are watching," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer ahead of the vote. "The public will not forget which side of the vote senators fall on today."

Congress has battled for years over abortion policy, but the Wednesday vote to take up a House-passed bill was given new urgency after the disclosure of a draft Supreme Court opinion to overturn the Roe decision that many had believed to be settled law.

The outcome of the conservative-majority court's actual ruling, expected this summer, is sure to reverberate around

the country and on the campaign trail ahead of the fall midterm elections that will determine which party controls Congress.

Security was tight at the Capitol where Vice President Kamala Harris presided, and it has been bolstered across the street at the Supreme Court after protesters turned out in force last week following the leaked draft.

Scores of House Democratic lawmakers marched protest-style to the Senate and briefly watched from the visitor galleries.

Harris can provide a tie-breaking vote in the 50-50 split Senate, but that was beside the point on Wednesday. One conservative Democrat, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, voted with the Republicans, saying he supported keeping Roe v. Wade but believed the current bill was too broad.

Over several days, Democratic senators delivered speeches contending that undoing abortion access would mean great harm, not only for women but for all Americans planning families and futures.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., said that most American women have only known a world where abortion access was guaranteed but could face a future with fewer rights than their mothers or grandmothers.

"That means women will not have the same control over their lives and bodies as men do, and that's wrong," she said in the run-up to Wednesday's vote.

Few Republican senators spoke in favor of ending abortion access, but they embraced the filibuster to block the bill from advancing.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, an architect of the effort to install conservative justices on the Supreme Court – including three during the Trump era – has sought to downplay

the outcome of any potential changes in federal abortion policy. {eoa}

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