

How to Organize a Protest

Planning Your Protest

Going out into the streets to protest with other activists is one of the best ways to raise awareness for your cause. The following guide will help you to plan out an abortion rights protest in your state:

- **Find advocacy partners.** There is power in numbers, and you can increase the size and visibility of your protest by partnering with organizations in your state doing pro-abortion advocacy work.
- **Determine the main theme of your protest.** Get creative with the key messages that you want to share with your protest! For example, Planned Parenthood has organized “Bans Off Our Bodies” protests in the past—it’s a recognizable slogan that also shows outrage at the policing of Americans’ reproductive choices. Think of a recognizable theme or slogan that is relevant to your state’s situation and your advocacy group’s mission. You can also turn your slogan into a hashtag that can be shared widely on social media!
- **Decide on a time and place.** You should plan to have your protest in a highly visible area that will attract media attention, such as a state house, your state’s largest cities, or in front of a monument or landmark. You should pick a time when you can get as many people as possible to attend, such as the weekend or after 5:00 pm on weekdays.
- **Acquire the necessary permits.** Depending on the location of your protest, you may need to acquire a permit from your city’s officials— check in with them before you solidify your plans.
- **Advertise your protest.** This can be done in several ways. Using Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to share details about your protest will provide you with the widest reach. You can also post flyers around town or contact your local newspaper and radio stations to see if they can advertise the details of the event.
- **Create signs, banners, and chants.** Work with your fellow activists at a group meeting to create signs and banners with key slogans and hashtags. You can also add the name of your group or affiliated groups on your signs so you can raise awareness about *who* is advocating for abortion rights in your state.
- **Prepare for the day of the protest.** There are a lot of variables that can affect your protest: weather, length of time outside, distance traveled while marching, possible police presence, etc. At your protest, you should have things such as your protest permit, an official ID card, a first aid kit, a cell phone, food and water, and appropriate clothing for the weather conditions. Speak with people in your advocacy groups to determine any other items you might need to bring on the day of the protest.

Before You Protest: Know Your Rights

Everyone has the following human rights:

- **Freedom of Expression and Assembly:** Everyone has the right to carry their opinion to the streets. People have the right to organize peaceful protests and demonstrate free from intimidation, unnecessary or excessive force, and the threat of prosecution and detention
- **Protection of the Right to Freedom of Assembly:** Law enforcement must facilitate and not restrict a peaceful public assembly. Where a minority tries to turn a peaceful assembly into a violent one, law enforcement should protect the peaceful protestors and not use the violent acts of a few as pretext to restrict or impede the exercise of fundamental rights of a majority.

- **Freedom from Excessive Use of Force:** In the policing of non-violent protests, police must avoid the use of force. If it is unavoidable (for example to defend themselves or the public from an imminent risk of serious injury or death) they must use the minimum amount of force necessary. The type of equipment used to disperse crowds such as rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades can result in serious injury and even death and can only be used when necessary, proportional and lawful.
- **Right to Medical Assistance:** If you are injured you have a right to medical assistance without delay.
- **Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Detention:** If you are arrested you have a right to be told of the reason for your arrest, you also have the right promptly after your arrest to have access to a lawyer and to your family. No person under any form of detention may be subject to torture, or to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- **Right to Complain:** If your rights have been violated you have a right to file a complaint and to be provided information on how to do so. All violations of human rights by the police or other law enforcement personnel must be investigated fully, promptly and independently.

In the United States, however, restrictions have been put in place in multiple areas. Visit the ACLU “Protestor’s Rights” page to understand US/local laws around protest: <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights>