

#LetHerSpeak: Rep. Zooey Zephyr and supporters defy anti-trans bigots

written by Melinda Butterfield
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Rep. Zooey Zephyr

On April 26, the far-right-dominated Montana state legislature in Helena [censured the state's first elected trans representative](#), Zooey Zephyr, after silencing her for several days and threatening her with expulsion.

Zephyr will not be allowed to enter the chamber or speak for the remainder of the legislative session, disenfranchising her 11,000 constituents from Missoula.

The unconstitutional, transphobic, and misogynist silencing of an elected representative by the Republican majority follows in the footsteps of the Tennessee legislature's recent [expulsion of two young Black representatives](#), and the censure of [Oklahoma Rep. Mauree Turner](#), who is Black, Muslim, and nonbinary, after they defended a trans rights protester from police abuse.

Zephyr was attacked because she dared to condemn state legislation restricting gender-affirming care for trans youth. "You will have blood on your hands," she said, referring to the greatly increased suicide risk for trans people who don't have access to care and the stoking of anti-trans violence by similar bills across the U.S.

Zephyr's stand was in stark contrast to national Democratic Party leaders like Joe Biden, who have refused to condemn, much less take action against, increasingly Draconian anti-trans measures.

House Speaker Matt Regier first silenced Zephyr, refusing to acknowledge the representative or turn on her microphone during discussions. Republicans threatened and misgendered her in official documents.



Police arrest trans rights protesters in the Montana Capitol, April 24.

Days later, on April 24, when protesters responded by chanting “Let her speak!” from the gallery, Zephyr symbolically raised her silent microphone. Montana State Troopers in riot gear marched onto the floor of the legislature in front of Zephyr, then arrested seven people in the gallery. The Republican majority canceled the next day’s session.

When they resumed on April 26, the right-wing majority voted to punish Zephyr (and those she represents) with censure for the show of people power in their “hallowed hall.” The charge was “breaching decorum.”

Among those who spoke in support of Zephyr was Indigenous Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy: “The community that I represent does have trans. Some tribes, we call them two-spirit people. My late uncle, one of my teachers in my way of life ... told me no matter who you are, we are all equal under the eyes of the almighty.”

The ACLU and other groups plan to challenge the censure in the courts.

Right to representation under attack

The attacks on Zooey Zephyr in Montana, Justin Jones and Justin Pearson in Tennessee, and Mauree Turner in Oklahoma go far beyond the scope of electoral politics. They are attacks on the right of oppressed people to be represented or even speak on matters that directly affect their lives.

It's vital to see these anti-democratic measures in the larger context of the capitalist anti-trans panic. Missouri's attorney general ordered a ban on all gender-affirming care, including for adults. Texas, Florida, and other states are poised to enact similar bans.

At the direction of presidential hopeful Gov. Ron DeSantis, Florida's legislature has passed bills allowing the state to kidnap trans children from their parents and the children of trans parents and threatening to ban Pride parades and celebrations.

Meanwhile, on Elon Musk's Twitter app, the billionaire's fanbase is openly calling for public executions of trans people, their families, and their health care providers.

People are organizing and fighting back from Montana to Nebraska, from Ohio to Tennessee. Women in Struggle-Mujeres en Lucha has announced plans for a [National March on Florida to Protect Trans Youth and Trans Lives](#). It's a fight for the whole working class and progressive movement.

The fascist right and its capitalist backers are already expanding the attack to include the entire LGBTQ community, Black and Brown communities, women, and all workers - even pushing to roll back child labor laws from Iowa to Alabama.

If you haven't spoken up, if you haven't joined a protest, if you haven't paid attention - the time to change that is now.

