

## Cecilia Abbott, George P. Bush Headline Anti-Abortion Rally

by [Eva Hershaw](#) | Jan. 24, 2015 | [33 Comments](#)



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photo by: Bob Daemmrich

Texas first lady Cecilia Abbott and Land Commissioner George P. Bush at a Texas Alliance for Life rally at the Texas Capitol on Jan. 24, 2015.

Texas' new first lady, Cecilia Abbott, and land commissioner, George P. Bush, headlined an anti-abortion rally at the state Capitol on Saturday that drew an estimated 1,500

attendees. A nearby counter rally attracted a smaller crowd.

Flanked by Bush, Abbott, in her first public appearance since her husband's [inauguration on Tuesday](#), thanked the crowd for joining her "in the cause of protecting life."

"The inauguration celebrations have ended, and now the real work begins," she said.

Abbott read a letter from her husband emphasizing his stance on abortion and the new restrictions on the procedure passed by Texas lawmakers in 2013. "Because of you, innocent life is protected after five months, the unborn are spared pain and safety standards for women are improved," she told the crowd, speaking on behalf of her husband. "And protecting the unborn will always be a priority while serving as your governor."

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Bush, a Republican who was sworn into office [earlier this month](#), also used the event to emphasize his opposition to abortion.

"Today we recognize that 42 years ago there was a Supreme Court decision that we all know too well legalizing abortion. A national nightmare began that continues today," Bush said, referring to the recent anniversary of Roe v. Wade. He added, "By standing here today, we show that every life matters."

Abbott's appearance at the rally, which was organized by the Texas Alliance for Life, served as an indication of how she might approach her role as first lady. It also drew criticism from abortion rights activists.

"It is a signal that the leadership of Texas remains out of touch with what the majority of Texans want, which is definitely not more restrictions on access to abortions and birth control," Heather Busby, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, said in an interview before the event.

Speaking at the counter rally on Saturday, state Rep. [Jessica Farrar](#), D-Houston, urged attendees to keep fighting.

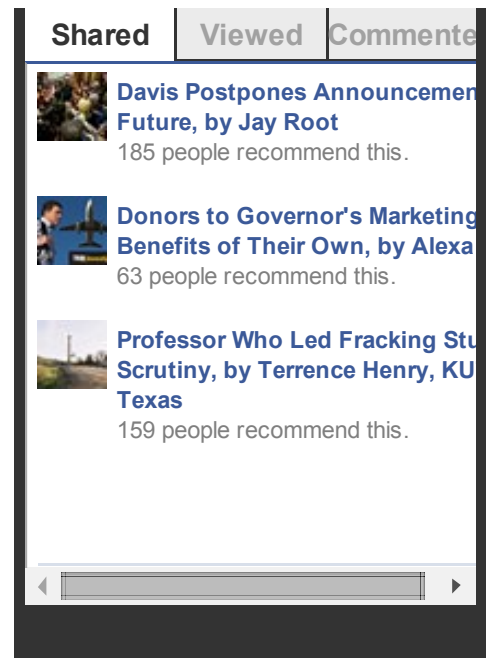
"We are not done here," Farrar said, referring to the new abortion restrictions, adding, "We have a more hostile Senate this time around, and we will need you more than ever."

After a strong showing in the November elections, Republicans gained seats in both the state House and Senate ahead of this year's legislative session.




Though the end of the last legislative session was marked by a divisive and high-profile debate over the state's new abortion law, known as House Bill 2, the issue is not expected to be as heated this year.

Challenges to the abortion restrictions have moved through the legal system since the bill was signed into law in 2013. Texas abortion providers are now suing the state over a key provision that requires facilities that perform abortions to meet the same hospital-like standards as ambulatory surgical centers.

The U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals is currently weighing the case against the state. A three-judge panel heard arguments in the case earlier this month and [questioned](#) the state's defense of the law. A decision from the court is not expected for several weeks.



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HB 2 also requires doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of an abortion facility. Abortion providers so far have been [unsuccessful](#) in their legal challenge to that provision of the law.

Since taking effect, the law has closed all but 18 of 41 clinics that were operating in the state before the law's passage, according to the Texas Policy Evaluation Project at the University of Texas at Austin.

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