

1773, 1913, 1963, 1969, and 2020. Protests have changed the course of U.S. history.

In 1773 sixty men dumped tea in a harbor to protest taxation without representation. The Boston Tea Party sparked the First Continental Congress, which led to the American Revolution.

In 1913 more than five thousand women with floats, bands, and horse brigades marched for the right to vote. When the men lining the street attacked them, the police did not intervene. Photos of violence against peaceful marchers caused outrage. The Women's Suffrage Parade culminated in the passing of the 19th amendment, allowing women to vote.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 was one of the most famous marches of the Civil Rights movement, but it was not the only one. Non-violent protests, sit-ins, marches, and bus boycotts resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

When police raided the Stonewall bar in 1969, the gay patrons resisted. Six days of protest brought attention to the unequal treatment and harassment of the LGBTQ community. Since then, landmark court rulings have removed discriminatory laws and put protections in place for those in the LGBTQ community.

The Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 made people uncomfortable. But these protest brought attention to the unequal treatment of Blacks by the police, by the judicial system, and by American society in general.

If we aspire to have a "government of the people, by the people, for the people," as Lincoln proclaimed, then we must acknowledge that democracy is messy. When those in power do not listen to the people, then the people have the right to protest, guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. In a democracy, the power of the government comes from the people.

What is not messy? Authoritarian or dictatorial governments. One of the tell-tale signs is outlawing freedom of speech, criminalizing dissent, and jailing protestors.

These HB 109 and HB 22 cross the line into authoritarian territory. To protest is part of American DNA. It is how we evolve as a democracy.

Please vote NO on HB 109 and HB 22.