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Montana State Rep. Zooney Zephyr Sues After Being Barred From House Floor

Zephyr, one of the state's first transgender lawmakers, said the effort to silence her was "a disturbing and terrifying affront to democracy itself."

By Nick Visser

May 2, 2023, 12:12 AM EDT





Montana state Rep. Zoey Zephyr (D) [filed a lawsuit Monday](#) asking a court to let her return to the statehouse floor after [Republicans](#) moved to punish her for speaking out against legislation that limits health care for trans youth.

Zephyr, who is one of Montana’s first transgender lawmakers, [was censured last week](#) by the House’s GOP majority and barred from the chamber floor for the remainder of the legislative session. The suit, [filed alongside the American Civil Liberties Union](#), claims the party’s actions violate her First Amendment rights and those of her constituents. It requests Zephyr’s legislative abilities be restored immediately as there are just a few days left in the current session.

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“This effort by House leadership to silence me and my constituents is a disturbing and terrifying affront to democracy itself,” Zephyr said in

targeted me and my district because I dared to give voice to the values and needs of transgender people like myself.

Rep. Zooney Zephyr

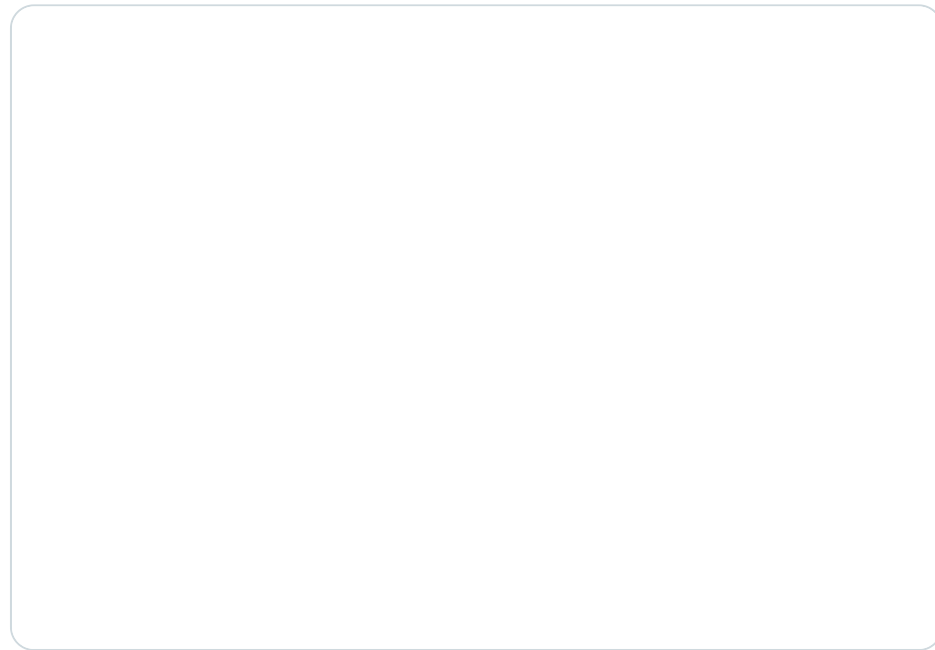


@ZoAndBehold · [Follow](#)

I'm suing.

The recent actions violate my 1st amendment rights, as well as the rights of my 11,000 constituents to representation.

Montana's State House is the people's House, not Speaker Regier's, and I'm determined to defend the right of the people to have their voices heard.



7:59 AM · May 1, 2023



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legislation that would ban gender-affirming care for trans youth, a law that has [since been signed](#) into law by the state's Republican governor, Greg Gianforte.

"If you vote yes on this bill and yes on these amendments, I hope the next time there's an invocation, when you bow your heads in prayer, you see the blood on your hands," Zephyr said during a hearing before the chamber passed the legislation.

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Her GOP colleagues initially said they wouldn't allow Zephyr to speak on the chamber floor until she apologized, a decision that [prompted protests from her supporters](#) in the statehouse before the ultimate censure vote. Her case has become national news, following a separate effort by Republicans in Tennessee to [expel two House Democrats](#) who called for gun control. (Both lawmakers have since been reinstated.)

A spokesperson for Montana's attorney general, Austin Knudsen, rejected the claims in Monday's case, [saying](#) Zephyr's suit was "performance litigation" and "political activism masquerading as a lawsuit" in a statement to The Associated Press.

as it carries out its constitutional duties on behalf of Montanans, the spokesperson said in a statement. “Any relief granted by the court would be a gross violation of the separation of powers.”

Republicans have spent the past year introducing hundreds of anti-LGBTQ bills nationwide, but lawmakers in Montana were outraged by Zephyr’s comments, saying her statements were “inappropriate, disrespectful and uncalled for.”

A group of 21 conservative Republicans [intentionally misgendered](#) Zephyr in those remarks.

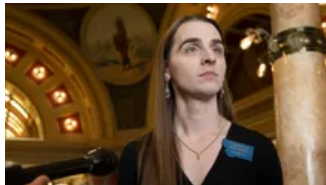
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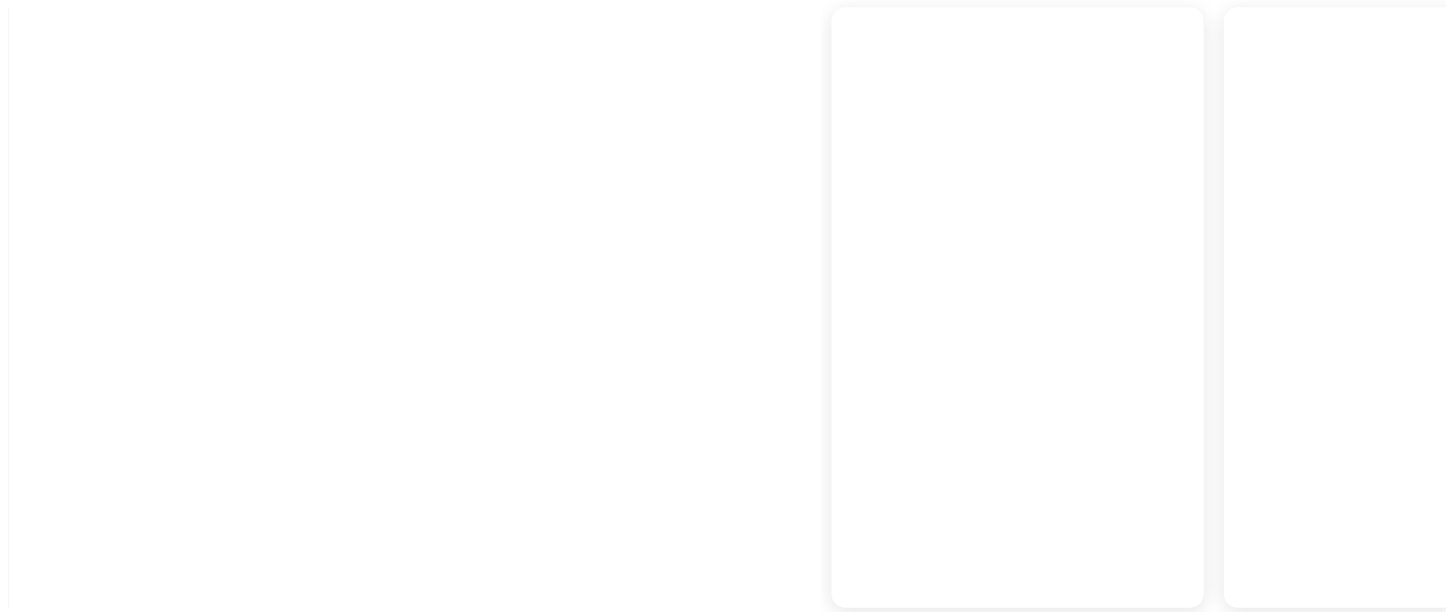
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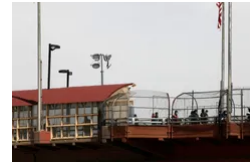
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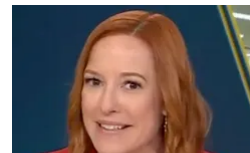
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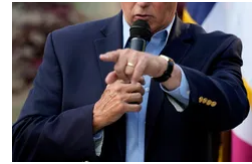
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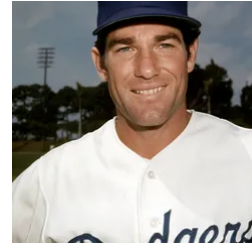
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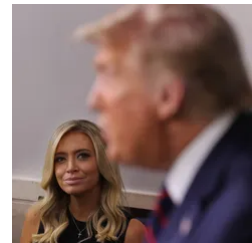
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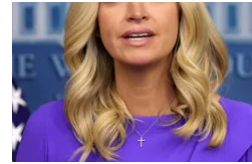
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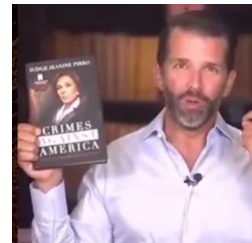
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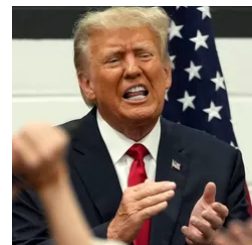
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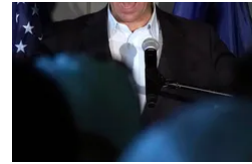
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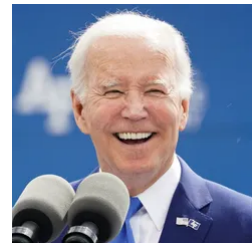
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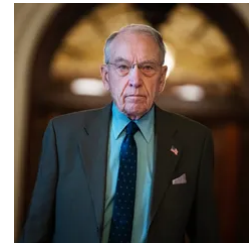
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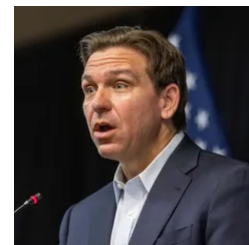
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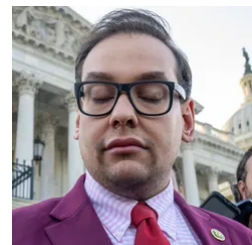
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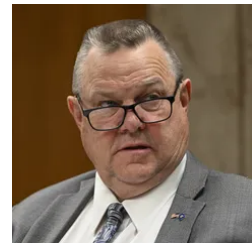
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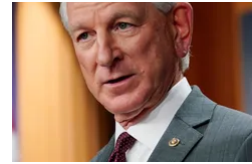
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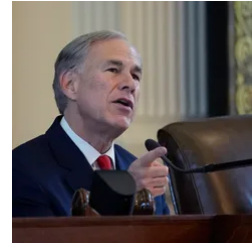
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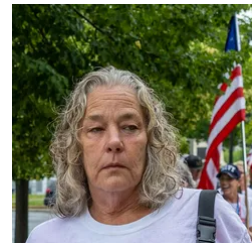
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