

These women quilters are giving their legislators a piece of their mind—one quilt square at a time

by [Yonat Shimron](#)

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Alisyn Rogerson, right, designs a quilt square in Durham, North Carolina, on April 25. (RNS photo/Yonat Shimron)

The card holders on the long dining room table offered guidance to the women assembled around it: “Keep it Constitutional” and “Keep it Kind.”

With those themes in mind, about 10 women, using beige or light blue fabric pieces and colorful markers, sat down to craft messages to their state representative or senator:

“Checks and balances are vital to protect the power of Congress.”

“We the People”

“Rule of law for all”

“Everyone deserves due process”

Their 10×10 fabric pieces were later stitched together to form a quilt—one of 57 to be presented to members of Congress on Wednesday. The handiwork of these women, who assembled in a suburban Durham, North Carolina, home on April 25, is part of [Peace by Piece](#), an interfaith project led by the group Mormon Women for Ethical Government.

The nonpartisan group wanted to find a way to express its concerns about abuses of the democratic system the president and lawmakers were elected to protect. They zeroed in on the [First Article](#) of the Constitution, which defines the powers of Congress, and encouraged their 8,500 members across the country and partners, including the Jewish group [A More Perfect Union](#), to join them.

“Our religion is very much about the Constitution and the rule of law,” said Stephanie Hawver of Durham, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who assembled around the dining room table of Mychael-Ann Pelo to draw messages on a quilt to present to Republican Sen. Ted Budd of North Carolina. “When we see things going on against that, we need to do something, but do it in a peaceful way because the idea is that you can reach a lot more people by approaching them as a community, instead of an ‘us vs. them’ type thing.”

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As protests surge across the country in response to the Trump administration’s testing of the tenets of US democracy, these women have found in quilt making another avenue to express their outrage.

Quilt making has a long and storied history. It was used to advance women’s voices on slavery abolition, civil rights, and the many people who lost their lives to AIDS. For these women the issue is safeguarding democracy with its separation of powers and checks and balances.

Democracy is also an issue Latter-day Saints can agree on. About 40 percent of Mormon Women for Ethical Government members are Republicans, 34 percent Democrats, and about 26 percent independents and unaffiliated, co-executive

director Emma Petty Addams said. That makes other single issues harder to agree on.

The project's brainchild is Jessica Preece, a political scientist at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

Preece said she felt the need to do something to protest the dismantling of government agencies such as the US Agency for International Development without instruction from Congress. She considered planning a demonstration but wondered how effective that would be.

"There was no way 55 people in Provo were going to make the news cycle," Preece said. "It wasn't gonna matter. And so I thought, well, I'm not sure this is the best use of anybody's time."

Preece then remembered her mother, who took up quilting late in life after finding an unfinished quilt that her grandmother had started. Preece also knew that quilt making has served women throughout the years, both as a homemaking skill and as a way of expressing their ideas in times when other avenues were not available to them.

In the 19th century, abolitionist Lydia Maria Child stitched a crib quilt honoring enslaved mothers whose children were torn from them. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union created the "Drunkard's Path" quilt pattern to promote abstinence from alcohol. During World War I, women raised money by quilting a popular Red Cross pattern. And during the 1960s, poor Black women in Gee's Bend, Alabama, started the Freedom Quilting Bee.

Preece ran the idea by Mormon Women for Ethical Government, of which she is a member. Within 48 hours, the group got 120 women and children to the courthouse plaza in Provo on a cold but sunny February day. They set out tables, chairs, sewing machines, and Sharpie pens. Preece cut out the squares. In no time, they had enough squares for two quilts—one for each of Utah's senators.

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"There was conversation, there was connection, and then it was just exciting to kind of watch everyone's words be sewn together into a beautiful quilt," said Petty Adams, who attended the event.

Soon after, the group launched its campaign, Quilting for the Constitution: Peace by Piece. Several civil society groups including A More Perfect Union, the Jewish organization, signed on as partners.

Over the past two months, the group has held 52 quilting events across the country in libraries, public meeting spaces and in people's homes. On Tuesday, they gathered near the US Capitol to hand tie and bind the quilts together, before delivering them to elected representatives.

Pelo, who works for the Mormon women's group in North Carolina, said the project appealed to her because of its communal nature.

"There's a lot of power in doing things together in community," Pelo said. "I think that's what this moment calls for, so it spoke to me."

Pelo put out the word to her congregation, book club and neighbors, and 13 women showed up to quilt at her home that April evening. As they completed each piece, they hung them on a clothesline she attached to a cabinet wall. This past weekend, she sewed them into a quilt with the North Carolina flag in the center.

At least two of the women in attendance were Jewish neighbors.

"Someday I'm gonna have to answer to my children and grandchildren: Why did bubbe not do anything while the country crumbled?" said Suzanne Minton, using the Yiddish word "bubbe" for grandmother. "I feel a responsibility to speak out."

As they worked, they talked about Trump administration cuts to [cancer research](#) and [women's health studies](#). One woman shared that her husband was laid off from his job with the USAID.

Another talked about how North Carolina lawmakers were [trying to create an office similar to DOGE](#), the national Department of Government Efficiency.

Alisyn Rogerson of Durham quietly took a red Sharpie and crafted her own statement on a piece of cloth: "Dignity in every instance for every person." The music teacher and violinist said she reads Heather Cox Richardson's popular Substack, "Letters from an American," every morning and, alongside her husband, has attended a lot of rallies.

"I just have to do something," she said. "I'm so angry." —Religion News Service