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DECISION BRINGS OUT THE CROWD

Andrew Dunn, DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Chilly weather didn't keep protesters and spectators away from the Florida Supreme Court Tuesday night.

As a spokesman stepped up to a microphone to read the justices' ruling, a large crowd, made up mostly of media, made a semi-circle around the steps of the stately building straining to hear what was being said.

Word of the ruling spread through the group, and some people began to bark taunts at the justices who ruled that the hand recounts must be included in the state's final election results. Others expressed relief.

"I'm happy about it," said Tallahassee resident **Michael Dobson**, with a Gore/Lieberman sign in hand. "Although it's a heated political decision, ultimately it should be looked at as a people decision."

He said that he hopes all South Florida counties engaged in recounts are doing their best to ensure that every vote is counted.

Kelly Chancy, also a Tallahassee resident, stood near **Dobson** holding her Bush/Cheney sign high over her head.

"I'm obviously appalled by their decision," Chancy said. "Every one of these judges was appointed by a Democrat. I find they're acting very biased."

She said she decided to come out and protest after the Supreme Court got involved.

"I would have liked the Florida Supreme Court to stay out of this," she said. "I'm afraid of what this precedent will set for future elections."

Another Bush backer came all the way from Indiana to show his support for the Texas governor. Fred Rodgers said he was headed to Washington D.C. to protest when he heard that the political hot spot was the Sunshine State.

"When I came down I was mad," Rodgers said. "When the Supreme Court got involved I was outraged. I feel this Supreme Court is part of the Democratic machine."

He said he thinks the justices have changed the law retroactively.

"The average citizens in the heartland of America will never accept this," he said.

However, not everyone was so dour.

"I think it was a great ruling," Christin Foster said. "It gives both candidates an equal opportunity."

"I believe it will help people know that their vote counts," Barbara Avirom said. "If Bush had been losing, I think the same thing would have happened."

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