

Conservative protesters chanting "Kill that bill!" stormed the Capitol on Thursday as Republicans launched a last-ditch effort against the Democrats' healthcare bill.

The protesters from around the country entered House office buildings after attending the "House Call" rally on healthcare, largely the brainchild of Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.).

The action happened as Democrats scrambled to find the votes to win approval of their healthcare bill on Saturday.

"My colleagues and I last week were racking our brains, trying to figure out what we could do, because Republicans ... don't have the votes," said Bachmann, who used her appearance on Fox's "Hannity" show Friday and her sizable online following to urge protesters to converge on the Capitol.

"We knew that we were limited, but what we knew was unlimited was the voice of persuasion of the American people," the congresswoman added. "And that's why you're here today."

The event was reminiscent of the Sept. 12 "tea party" on the National Mall that protested a variety of positions backed by President Barack Obama and the Democratic Congress.

Separately on Thursday, the GOP held a 12-hour online town hall in which Republican lawmakers and analysts criticized the Democrats' bill.

Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.) said the events Thursday should put vulnerable Democrats on notice before Saturday's vote.

"If I'm a Democrat, I'm watching what happened today on those Capitol steps," Kingston said. "I'm gonna be really careful before I throw my career away in one vote, which is going to

happen for many members on Saturday.”

Angst over the vote may have intensified with victories by Republican gubernatorial candidates in Virginia and New Jersey on Tuesday.

But some Democrats said Thursday that the protesters weren't going to change any minds.

“I think it's a great exercise in democracy, but it isn't going to make a damn bit of difference at this point,” Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.) told The Hill in an interview.

The White House seemed to pay little attention. As the protest continued, the president visited the daily press briefing to laud the AARP and American Medical Association, which offered support Thursday for the House bill.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs dismissed the protest, saying “anybody that watches is struck by the fact that there's a rally going on without a solution on their side.”

But some cable networks opted to air footage of the protest while Gibbs and the president spoke.

It is unclear how many people attended the event, though the protesters appeared to number in the thousands. House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) estimated 10,000 attended.

U.S. Capitol Police arrested 10 demonstrators attending the event for protesting in and around Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) district office, according to Capitol Police spokeswoman Sgt. Kimberly Schneider.

Four of the protesters were charged with unlawful entry as they attempted to gain access to her

second-floor office, while six more were charged with unlawful conduct in the hallway outside the office.

Earlier Thursday, police arrested nine protesters near Sen. Joe Lieberman's (I-Conn.) office. They were part of a larger group composed of about two dozen protesters from activist groups Code Pink, Voters for Peace and Mobilization for Healthcare for All. The group was demanding that Lieberman refuse to accept any more campaign money from insurance companies.

Some offices needed help handling the visitors once they were admitted to the building. Sources said that Rep. Gerry Connolly's (D-Va.) office had to call the Capitol Police for protection and crowd control.

Lawmakers were harangued as they re-entered the office buildings following an afternoon vote as Republicans rallied the crowds.

"Thank you all for being here; thank you all for coming; keep it up!" Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.) told the line of visitors waiting to enter the Longworth House Office Building.

Campbell then started a rousing chorus of "Kill the bill!"

Protesters crowding an incoming Orange Line Metro train Thursday told The Hill that buses were coming from Atlanta and Virginia Beach and that protest groups were arriving from Chicago and as far away as Seattle.

Brothers Scott and Dean Brown of Northern Virginia said that they hoped the effort would be a "wakeup call" to legislators, particularly in terms of 2010 vulnerability.

"We don't want the public option of government-run healthcare," Scott Brown said. "The healthcare system is not 'broken,' it just needs a tune-up now and then."

The GOP town hall event received nearly 13,000 hits and received nearly 600 viewer questions by late afternoon, according to the Republican National Committee.

“Our total focus is to make sure the people understand what’s in the Pelosi healthcare plan,” said House Republican Conference Chairman Mike Pence (Ind.) of the webcast.

Pence, a former conservative radio host who shared hosting duties, said the town hall was a good way to “literally explain online in an unstructured way” the Republicans’ understanding of Democrats’ health bill.