

9 Reasons Why Assisted Suicide is Bad Policy

Before getting to the reasons why legal assisted suicide is bad policy, we need to review the states where it is currently legal:

“Death with Dignity” Results in States Legalizing Assisted Suicide

| <u>State</u> | <u>Reporting Period</u> | <u># of Years</u> | <u># of Suicides*</u> |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Oregon | 1998 - 2018 | 21 | 1,443 |
| Washington | 2009 - 2017 | 9 | 1070 |
| California | 6/2016 - 2017 | 1.67 | 374** |
| Vermont | 5/2013 – 6/2017 | 4 | 29 |
| Colorado | 2017-2018 | 2 | 113 |
| TOTAL: | | | 3,029 |

- A Washington, DC law became effective on July 17, 2017. As of 4/10/18, no one had availed themselves of its provision.
- Hawaii passed an assisted suicide law on 4/20/18, becoming effective 1/1/19
- New Jersey passed a law on April 12, 2019, becoming effective on August 1, 2019.
- Maine passed a law on June 12, 2019, apparently becoming effective on the same date.
- Assisted suicide is legal in Montana as a result of a decision by the Montana Supreme Court in December 2009 stating that nothing in state law prohibited a physician from honoring a terminally ill, mentally competent patient’s request to prescribe lethal medication to hasten death. A bill to declare assisted suicide illegal in Montana passed the Montana House of Representatives by 53-47 on 2/14/19 but failed in the state Senate by 22 to 27 on 4/15/19. Hence, assisted suicide remains legal in Montana. No data are available on the number of deaths occurring due to the court’s ruling in 2009.
- *Based on annual reports. States reported number of lethal medications prescribed and persons dying thereof except Colorado, which reported only number prescribed. The 113 Colorado deaths indicated here are based on Oregon’s 20-year experience, which found that 64.8% of those prescribed medication died as a result of ingesting it, others dying from natural causes or remaining alive.
- **California’s law is being contested but remains in effect while the litigation continues.

The Patient’s Rights Council indicated that 19 state legislatures considered bills regarding assisted suicide laws thus far in 2019, with 12 states rejecting them by vote, allowing them to languish in committee or legislative files, or having them withdrawn by sponsors. Assisted suicide is illegal in Ohio.

The reasons why assisted suicide is bad policy:

1. Assisted suicide is fundamentally a moral/religious issue. But its proponents simply take for granted that it is a right without making any attempt to articulate a coherent philosophy to illustrate why this is so. They seem to assume a secular principle: that there is nothing after death, and that the individual’s final act has no eternal consequences.
2. Legalizing assisted suicide results in a slippery slope. Wherever it has become legal, activists push for it to be available in more circumstances for an ever-widening circle of individuals. After all, if we accept that there is a personal “right to die,” who can be denied the right? Initial talking points about “safeguards” and “limited circumstances” are quickly ignored or violated.

3. Assisted suicide undermines the traditional purpose of the medical establishment: to heal, save lives, and reduce pain. It may retard work on the development of new cures and techniques of palliative care. On the other hand, it has already promoted research which creates pressures to exploit it. An article in the July 2, 2019 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association reported on a Belgian study which compared the survival rates of grafts and patients who had been given livers obtained after: 1.)brain death; 2.)circulatory death; and 3.)after euthanasia (being legal in Belgium), which found slightly greater longevity for both the grafts and patients who received livers from euthanasia victims.
4. Assisted suicide requires the state and the medical establishment to judge what constitutes “a life worth living.” As a result, those with disabilities or otherwise suicide vulnerable are put even more at risk, as the state confirms their lack of worth by legislating an avenue they can use to kill themselves.
5. With rising medical costs, there have already been cases in the U.S. where persons seeking government help with their medical bills have been offered assisted suicide instead.
6. Assisted suicide blurs what were once clear lines. If someone with a psychiatric condition that qualifies them for legal assisted suicide phones a suicide hot line, should they be referred to a willing physician or be talked out of suicide? Or would such a consultation be seen by some as a “violation” of their “right” to government suicide? Once people started calling abortion a “right,” those attempting to talk women out of an abortion were accused of violating that “right.”
7. Giving medical professionals a legally protected right to kill, even in initially restricted circumstances, is dangerous. The potential for this right to be misused to cover up malpractice and botched treatment has already been reported, as has simply dispatching difficult and troublesome patients.
8. Instances of children encouraging aged parents to take this route to protect a shrinking inheritance have already surfaced in the U.S. and Europe.
9. The historical lesson to be learned from those American states and European countries which have legalized assisted suicide or euthanasia is this: Once we allow people to kill themselves, or to kill others motivated by “mercy,” the circle of who dies and the reasons permitting them to kill themselves or others continues to expand, while initial “safeguards” in the law continue to recede.

Note: The first 8 reasons given above draw feely from the following article: Jonathan Van Maren, “20 reasons why euthanasia corrupts everything it touches, and must be opposed.” LifeSiteNews, June 9, 2016.

For a longer paper dealing with the early development of “Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in the United States,” go to www.rtlfne.com, click on “issues”, then scroll down and click on that title.

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