

NEWSLETTER DEATH with DIGNITY NATIONAL CENTER

4th July 2018

This Year's Progress

In November, we will mark 10 years since Washington voters approved the Death with Dignity Act.

After we successfully defended the Oregon law from legal challenges, the nation's second assisted dying law launched our movement's second decade, in which we started bringing the law as a model to other states, including Vermont.

We began the third decade by successfully advancing this legislation in California and other jurisdictions, and seeing half the country's state legislatures take up the issue.[1]

Today the state of the death with dignity movement is strong:

- **We are making progress.** In April we added Hawaii to the ranks of states with aid-in-dying statutes; we defended the D.C. law from a congressional attack; and 20 additional state legislatures considered death with dignity bills. See more below.
- **Public support remains high.** Seven in ten Americans support death with dignity. The latest Gallup poll has shown 72 percent of Americans support the legal right of terminally ill people to die.[2]

At the same time, **death with dignity is under attack.** Our religiously-motivated opponents are gaining ground across the country. Congress is again considering a repeal of the D.C. Death with Dignity Act, and in California a district judge temporarily overturned the End of Life Option Act. We are fighting on both fronts.

Here in greater detail is what support means:

[California](#)

After nearly two years of providing peace of mind to dying Californians, the End of Life Option Act was overturned in court. An appellate court stayed the cruel ruling, reinstating the Act, but patients and physicians remain in a state of uncertainty.

As the legal battle continues, we are **supporting** California Attorney General's work, **filing** an amicus brief, and **fighting** the plaintiffs' fear-mongering campaign to deny Californians their rightful end-of-life options.

[District of Columbia](#)

Opponents of death with dignity are using their sway in Congress to get the D.C. law repealed through the federal appropriations process.

Having worked in D.C. from Day 1 in 2015, **we're fending off the repeal effort** as part of the Home Rule Coalition, an alliance led by D.C. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton.

Hawaii

The brightest spot on the [death with dignity map](#) this year, Hawaii is the seventh jurisdiction to pass a death with dignity statute.

The successful legislative votes this year **culminated nearly 17 years of our involvement** in the Aloha State. The statute will take effect in 2019.

Maine

Following two consecutive attempts to pass death with dignity in the legislature, Mainers have taken matters into their own hands and are taking the issue to the 2019 ballot.

In collaboration with local advocates, **we have formed the political action committee [Maine Death with Dignity](#)**, whose volunteers are hard at work gathering signatures on the petition.

New York

In collaboration with three local organizations, **we have formed the New York Coalition for Medical Aid in Dying**, which is campaigning for a death with dignity law in the Empire State. The proposed law this year received not one but two hearings.

North Carolina and Ohio

We're proud to **support the work of Ohio End of Life Options and Dying Right North Carolina**, participants in our Dignity 50 State Leadership Incubator (see below). Both of these new organizations have become the go-to partners for legislators sponsoring assisted dying laws and continue to advocate for end-of-life options in their respective states.

Other States

This year, death with dignity bills were introduced or carried over from 2017 in [Alaska](#), [Arizona](#), [Connecticut](#), [Delaware](#), [Indiana](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [Missouri](#), [Nebraska](#), [New Jersey](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Rhode Island](#), [Tennessee](#), [Utah](#), and [Wisconsin](#).

Though none of these bills advanced, I am not discouraged, on the contrary. In most of these states, bills returned for consideration after previous attempts; Indiana even saw its first aid in dying proposal in history.

Death with dignity is squarely and increasingly on the legislative agenda around the country.

Advocacy

Recognizing that effective local leadership is a key factor in the successful passage of death with dignity legislation, last year **we formed the [Dignity 50 State Leadership Incubator](#)**, a program through which we invest in the work of community leaders and advocates on the local level.

The goal of the Incubator is to provide information, resources, and expertise to help grow local organizations which can participate in effective campaigns and lead statewide advocacy efforts.

Get in touch if you'd like to be a part of this effort.[3]

November Election

Our victories take place on the local level. After the November mid-term election, next year's legislative session will see many new lawmakers enter the political arena. As you decide who will get your vote, I encourage you to ask candidates their stance on assisted dying.

Life and Liberty

On the one hand, we've been making unprecedented progress in ensuring terminally ill Americans can die the way they want.

Thanks to you, Death with Dignity National Center is better positioned for future success than ever.

On the other hand, **opponents of death with dignity have been emboldened to try to ban aid in dying nationwide and even managed to temporarily thwart the California law.** They are gaining traction and fighting death with dignity legislation on all fronts. Their national strategy is to stop our movement by preventing new legislation from passing, impeding implementation, and overturning existing statutes.

As we fight to stop them, I am reminded of something Victor Hugo once wrote:

"There is one thing stronger than all the armies of the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

I'm not going to sugarcoat it: even though death with dignity's time has come, success is not going to be easy and there will always be those who want to tell Americans how to die.

It is only if we continue to work together that we will succeed in ensuring all Americans have the right to die with dignity.

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