

Legislators Seek Debate on Death with Dignity

Written by State Senate Democrats
Thursday, 19 September 2019 09:46



End-of-Life Options Act would allow mentally capable, terminally ill adults with less than six months to live the ability to end life on their own terms.

MADISON – Today Senator Fred Risser (D-Madison) alongside Rep. Sindy Pope (D-Mt. Horeb) and Rep. Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) introduced the End-of-Life Options Act (LRB 1624-1). This medical aid-in-dying legislation, would allow mentally capable, terminally ill adults less than six months to live the ability to end life on their own terms.

“This is the 11th time I’ve introduced this type of legislation since 1993, and only twice have we had a hearing. The last time in 2007,” said Risser. “As a longstanding champion of this issue I hope that this session the citizens of Wisconsin will again see the legislature debate this important issue and allow terminally ill patients the right to end life on their own terms.”

In expressing her support, Rep. Pope declared, “As humans we face many difficult choices throughout our lives. It is my solemn hope that in the near future, Wisconsinites facing imminent death, have an option to avoid pain and suffering by making a final and dignified choice – to spend their final moments with their loved ones in a manner and at a time of their choosing.”

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Representative Hesselbein added, “This legislation is meaningful for the brave individuals and their families who will no longer be required to endure anguish beyond their capacity. This is a responsible last resort for people suffering terminal illnesses to have control over their circumstances and dignity in death.”

Since Senator Risser first introduced this legislation in 1993, ten jurisdictions have granted terminally ill patients the freedom to decide if they get to end life on their own terms (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, Washington). In Maine and New Jersey these death with dignity laws have taken effect in the past three months.

Gallup polling from 2018 found that 72 percent of the country agrees with the idea that doctors should legally be allowed to end a terminal patient’s life if the patient and family request it. Support for this policy cuts across numerous demographic categories:

- gender – 79 percent of men and 65 percent of women support this measure;
- age – 85 percent of persons 18 to 29, 72 percent of persons 30 to 49, 67 percent of persons 50-64 and 65 percent of persons 65 and older expressed support for this measure;
- party identification – 62 percent of Republicans, 73 percent of Independents and 80 percent of Democrats support this measure; and
- political ideology – 54 percent of Conservatives, 79 percent of Moderates and 89 percent of Liberals support this measure

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