

Community Voice

Passing Aid-In-Dying Bill Would Be An Act Of Courage

It was no coincidence that Roe v. Wade was a judicial decision rather than a legislative one.

6

By Richard Creagan  / About 11 hours ago

Share  6

Share 2

The U.S. Supreme Court has affirmed the right of mentally competent individuals to end their life but has also acknowledged that the states have the right to put some controls on how individuals end their lives. For now, the Supreme Court has acknowledged or ruled that there is no “right” to force medical doctors or other providers to assist that effort to end one’s life, but have also ruled that states can allow assistance in expanding the ways in which a life can end more peacefully.

We can withdraw life supports for a patient who will never regain consciousness based on declared wishes when that person was conscious and competent. It has never been illegal by statute to personally end your life in the United States.

This is about choice. Our deaths are inevitable, but we have the option to determine the time and circumstances. This is about the choice to end one’s life when that life is unbearable, and when that end is near.

When many individuals ended their lives by jumping from the twin towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, to escape the horrible flames, we did not condemn them, we condemned those who created the situation where that choice had to be made.



We decry all the gun homicides in the U.S., but forget that there are three gun suicides for every two homicides. Individuals can jump off a building, can hang themselves, can use helium to asphyxiate themselves, can shoot themselves, can swim out to sea and drown, can walk into the wilderness and freeze to death, can stop eating and drinking and linger for painful days or weeks.

They have that right, but why do we not provide a simple and more merciful choice? A choice to die surrounded by a circle of love, rather than to die horribly and alone?

It takes courage on the part of legislators to make that choice, it is not a task for the weak hearted. It was no coincidence that Roe v. Wade was a judicial decision rather than a legislative one. That too was a judgment about choice, again a very painful choice. Judges have to make tough decisions. In many

states they have to make the decisions to allow the state to execute people. I believe that judges will at some point in time find that euthanasia, the right to request assistance in ending one's life, will be legal. Euthanasia is now legal in Canada, made legal by their judges, not their legislators.

The veterinarian who testified in the hearings spoke about the horribly painful but morally imperative decision of dog and cat owners, of any animal owner, to end the life of an animal mercifully, even though that death will create a yawning hole in the hearts of the family of that beloved pet. Are our fathers and mothers, our sisters and brothers, our sons and daughters no more deserving of that love and mercy? Are we to deny the plea of John Radcliffe and many others to allow them a choice?

State legislators who represent one-sixth of our country's population have had the courage and wisdom to expand the choice of dying people who find living unbearable.

Most residents of Hawaii will never have to make the choice to end their lives, they will never have to jump from the twin towers, but most people support the right of dying individuals to make the choice to end their life peacefully and humanely.

Our legislators now face a tough choice that they do apparently do not want to face. Ask them to make that choice, ask them to represent the minority of people who want to make that choice against the tyranny of those whose fears and beliefs make them oppose this final respect to the autonomy of life and death. Ask them to make that choice.

Community Voices aims to encourage broad discussion on many topics of community interest. It's kind of a cross between Letters to the Editor and op-eds. This is your space to talk about important issues or interesting people who are making a difference in our world. Columns generally run about 800 words (yes, they can be shorter or longer) and we need a photo of the author and a bio. We welcome video commentary and other multimedia formats. Send to news@civilbeat.com.

About the Author



Richard Creagan

Richard Creagan, M.D., is a state representative from the Big Island. He was board certified and worked in Emergency Medicine in California and on the Big Island at Kona Hospital, where he was vice chief of staff. He left that specialty to retrain as a psychotherapist and received his B.A. in Psychology with Highest Honors from UH Hilo in 2009.

Use the **RSS** feed to subscribe to Richard Creagan's posts today

[SHOW COMMENTS](#)



IGNORANCE IS ~~BLISS~~ TOXIC.

Get Civil Beat's free morning newsletter to stay informed.

[SIGN ME UP!](#)

And don't worry, we hate spam too! You can unsubscribe any time.