



Wisconsin Update

Newsletter of Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin

Vol. 20, No. 2 Supporting the option of aid-in-dying for the terminally ill June 2010

Death with Dignity Law Is Being Implemented in Montana

63% of Montana Voters Support Montana Supreme Court Decision

(On April 9, 2010, Compassion & Choices of Montana issued a press release on developments in Montana, a portion of which appears here. The full press release and public opinion survey data can be found at www.compassionandchoices.org.)

HELENA, MT - Compassion & Choices, the nonprofit patients' rights group that won a Montana Supreme Court ruling allowing physicians to provide aid in dying to qualified terminally-ill adults, today reported that the *Baxter* ruling is being honored in the state.

"Doctors are learning about the ruling, and they are responding to their patients' requests according to the court's guidelines, and their personal ethical moral positions," said Compassion & Choices President Barbara Coombs Lee.

"Hospices and provider institutions are developing policies and serving their patients according to those policies."

The nation's oldest and largest nonprofit working for end-of-life care and choice reported on how aid in dying for terminally-ill adults is being applied in the state of Montana, and released findings from a public opinion survey of Montanans showing strong support for this end-of-life choice and the Supreme

Court's decision. The news conference launched a public education campaign to inform Montanans of this new choice for terminal patients and counter opponents who have announced they will attempt to take it away.

A strong majority of voters support end-of-life choices; nearly 2/3rds support the Supreme Court decision. Public opinion survey expert David Binder released results showing that a strong majority of Montana voters support end-of-life choices and the Supreme Court's *Baxter* decision. "Three in five (60%) of voters said they support end-of-life choices, while only 24% said they oppose," said Binder. "There is even greater support (63%) for the recent Supreme Court ruling, and nearly two in three voters (64%) want their own personal doctor to be able to comply with their end-of-life choices."

Rev. Nelson to speak at Church Services in Appleton on Sunday, July 18, 2010

Rev. Mathew Nelson, a C&C Board Member and minister of the United Church of Christ will speak at the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Appleton on July 18, 2010. See the notice on page 5 for details. Come to one of the services and bring a friend.

Visit www.compassionandchoiceswisc.org for the latest information regarding end-of-life issues.

Letter to the Board from Anne Zimmerman

I miss being part “of the action.” I don’t know when I can get there, but I will when possible. I wouldn’t blame you if you replaced me on the board, but I would miss being an integral part of such an important organization.

Regarding the newsletter, great job as always. I was especially pleased that we are continuing to support the death with dignity legislation. I was upset after the meeting last summer when the head of our national group said that legislation was no longer our priority. Just when I personally believed the concept

was gaining understanding and acceptance. I feel happy we will continue in this effort.

Love and good wishes. Anne

Susan Wester Addressed LaCrosse Unitarians

On May 9, Susan Wester, C&C of WI VP, spoke at the Unitarian Fellowship in LaCrosse. Her topic was *Death: Difficult Decisions*. She discussed dying in the context of history, dilemmas created by modern medicine, and current controversies surrounding some of the options for dying, including assisted suicide. About 50 people attended.

Board Sent \$1,000 to National to Protect Death with Dignity in Montana.

The Board received an urgent appeal from the C&C National office requesting funds to finance a publicity campaign to protect the favorable Court decision in Montana. After an email poll of members, the Board decided to send One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000) for the effort.

Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin Has a New Post Office Box Number and Zip Code

The location of our old Post Office Box caused a number of difficulties which I will not get into. Reason exists to believe the building housing it will soon be demolished.

Therefore, the Board decided to move our Post Office Box to a new location. Our new post office address is C&C of WI. P.O. Box 7563, Madison, Wisconsin 53707.

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Twists, Turns, & Inaction in the Saga of the Final Exit Network

From *the dignity report* of the Death with Dignity National Center, Spring 2010

At the Death with Dignity National Center, we have been intrigued by the on-going saga of state authorities in Georgia and Arizona versus Final Exit Network members who were arrested over a year ago. The splashy arrests and media coverage depicting a swarm of federal agents arresting an 81 year old doctor in Baltimore and threats of RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) charges traditionally reserved for gangsters and drug smugglers have made for compelling drama. But, the true story is the inaction of authorities.

It has been over a year since the Georgia Bureau of Investigation arrested four members of the Final Exit Network and conducted raids around the country on the organization's office and homes of key members of the Network. The arrests came after an eight month covert investigation into the practices of the organization, and the four were arrested on allegations of assisting in the suicide of John Celmer. Arrested were the then President of the Network, Thomas "Ted" Goodwin, and Claire Blehr, who allegedly were present at the death of Celmer. Also arrested were the group's medical director and another member, Dr. Lawrence Egbert and Nicholas Alan Sheridan. The four were indicted by a grand jury March, 2010, a full year after their arrests.

Georgia authorities froze the financial resources of the organization in February, 2009, after the arrests and threatened action under the Georgia RICO Act. Georgia authorities released the financial resources last year after

a judge ruled that there was no legal basis for the state of Georgia to continue to hold the funds.

A similar case in Arizona has seen more activity by authorities. In Arizona, four Network members are accused of assisting in the suicide of Jana Van Voorhis in 2007. In January of this year, one of the accused, a volunteer named Wye Hale-Rowe, agreed to testify against the three other defendants in a plea agreement. No further actions have been taken against the other three since Hale-Rowe's plea agreement.

Both cases revolve around state bans on "assisting suicide," and Final Exit Network contends that its members did not break state law in either case. Arizona law forbids "intentional aiding" in another's suicide, but the concepts behind "aiding" are not clearly defined. There has not been a prosecution under this statute in Arizona. Georgia's law is more specific, defining intentionally and actively assisting as "direct and physical involvement, intention or participation in the act of suicide," but this law, too, is untested.

Final Exit Network launched a "Liberty Fund" campaign to raise funds to defend its members and successfully argued in Georgia Court that its financial resources should be freed from the seizure. The organization will continue to defend its members in Georgia and Arizona in these closely watched cases. *Newsweek.com* recently covered this issue in more detail than space allows here.

Honor Roll of Supporters Who Gave to the March Fund Raising Appeal

Thirty-seven supporters answered the call of the March Fund Raising Appeal. The total donated was \$1550 plus the \$2000 challenge grant for a grand total of \$3550. A good show. I believe this is the largest response we have had in terms of the number of donors. The donors included:

Therese Ahlers	Madison
Thomas Barth	Eau Claire
Anna Mae & Russell Boothroyd	West Bend
Michael Brauner	Black River Falls
Kristen & Jeffery Brown	Chippewa Falls
Roland E. Buse	Oak Creek
Susan DeWitt Davie	Green Bay
Joan L. Deardorff	Wauwatosa
Richard Doxtator	Stevens Point
Barbara Fraser	Madison
David & Nancy Goode	LaCrosse
Ralph & Peggy Hudson	Eau Claire
Bernie Hughes	Superior
Norma Jensen	Middleton
Jim & Janna McCoy	Hollandale
Peter Ostlind	Madison
Gus & Joanne Ricca	Shorewood
Shirley Robbins	Madison
Rose B. Smith	Madison
Margaret Schneider	Stone Lake
Mary Van Gorden	Black River Falls
Joy L. Wolden	Brookfield
Anne Zimmerman	Portage

The national organization has told us they do not have funds to support our efforts in Wisconsin. We urge all members to make contributions in as much as they are able and be on the June Honor Roll.

Report on April Meeting: Assemblywoman Berceau Offers Suggestions on Getting Some Traction on Legislation

Terese Berceau (D-Madison) spoke to the meeting about the need to build popular support for a legislative proposal before it would get much traction in the Legislature.

She said that our group should do whatever it can to convince doctors and the medical society to change its historic position of being opposed to the option of physician aid in dying for the terminally ill.

We need to constantly write letters to the editor of newspapers whenever events are reported that lend themselves to a discussion of the choices, or lack of them, individuals have at the end of life.

We need to keep legislators informed about polls that show popular support for aid in dying.

We need to enlist the support of brave legislators, who will argue effectively against the refrain of opponents that aid in dying for the terminally ill is a communist plot to kill your grandmother.

Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin

Invites members, supporters and the public to services at the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Appleton, WI, featuring

Rev. Matthew Nelson

(Rev. Nelson is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and a member of the national board of directors of Compassion & Choices.)

Topic: The Personal and the Political: End of Life Choices

Sunday, July 18, 2010

At the 9:15 A.M. and the 10:45 A.M. services

Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

2600 E. Philip Lane

Appleton, WI

Directions: Take U.S. 41 to Appleton: at Exit 134, take U.S.-10 E/ WI-441 N: continue on WI-441 N: take the County Hwy KK/ Calumet St. Exit: keep left at the fork, follow signs for Calumet St. W/ Appleton/ County Rd. KK W: turn left at E Calumet St./ County Rd KK : turn left at S. Matthias St.: take the 1st left onto Philip Lane.

Compassion & Choices Membership Form	Yes! I want to join Compassion & Choices *	
	___ \$45 Individual ___ \$60 Couple ___ \$450 Life Member ___ \$600 Life Couple Members	
	<i>Please supply complete address:</i>	
	Name/s _____ Address _____ City _____ State Zip _____ Telephone () _____ E-Mail _____	Make Checks Payable to and Send To: Compassion & Choices P.O. Box 101810 Denver, CO 80250-1810 Or Call: 1-800-247-7421 Visa or MasterCard accepted Dues are not tax deductible Do not send dues to the Chapter's mailbox in Madison
* The payment of dues includes your membership in Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin . You are invited to call 1-800-247-7421 if you cannot afford the \$45 membership. Every effort will be made to accommodate your circumstances.		

Letter to the Editor from a Montana Cancer Patient

(Mr. Johnson's letter appeared recently in the Great Falls Tribune in Montana.)

I have spoken with my doctor about what is likely to happen as my brain cancer progresses. I am now fairly disabled and it is likely that I will go blind. I am very concerned about intense pain and loss of dignity as the cancer worsens.

I am 72 years old. I spent my working years as a large-animal veterinarian, farmer, rancher and schoolteacher. I had a very healthy life, until eight years ago.

I was feeding the cows and calves on our ranch that spring, carrying a hay bale in the fields, when I passed out. My wife took me to the hospital, and tests revealed that I had brain cancer.

Surgery removed much, but not all, of the cancer. I have undergone a series of radiation treatments, and even traveled to Stan-

ford University for treatment using the newest technology.

The current phase of my illness feels like the last hurrah. After eight years of living under the gun while fighting brain cancer, it's becoming clear the cancer is not going away and my life is nearing its end.

I was heartened when the Montana Supreme Court decided I have a choice on how I am allowed to die.

Government should stay out of the medical decisions between a doctor and a mentally competent, terminally ill adult.

It's only compassionate to minimize unnecessary suffering at the end of life and to let me make the choice about how much suffering to endure, based on my own values and beliefs.

Steve Johnson
Helena, MT
May 10, 2010

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

See address label for your membership expiration date.

<http://www.compassionandchoiceswisc.org>

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