



Wisconsin Update

Newsletter of Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin

Vol. 20, No. 4 Supporting the option of aid-in-dying for the terminally ill December, 2010

Peter Shumlin, Champion of Death with Dignity Legislation, Elected Governor of Vermont

(This story is based on an article in the dignity report, a publication of the Death with Dignity National Center, fall 2010, a press release of the DDNC and a blog by Compassion & Choices both on November 3, 2010, and the New York Times of Nov. 4, 2010.)

Peter Shumlin is the current President Pro-Tem of the Vermont State Senate. He won the race for governor against his Republican opponent by approximately 3500 votes. Shumlin had 49.5 % of the votes and his opponent had 48% of the total votes cast.

Shumlin has co-sponsored Death with Dignity legislation in the past, and he made the following statement during the recent campaign:

“As Governor, I will strongly champion Death with Dignity legislation. I have been a sponsor of this legislation for multiple years and I have a track record of bringing people together to get tough things done. I worked with a variety of Vermonters to make Vermont the first state in the nation to pass marriage equality and worked to close Vermont’s leaking, aging power plant on schedule. These were not easy issues, but in both cases taking on the tough fight was the right thing to do. I feel the same about patient choices at the end of life. As Governor, I would make this a top priority, and in my State of the State address

would ask the legislature to take this civil rights issue up and pass it prior to adjournment in 2011.”

Two right-to-die organizations, DDNC and Patient Choices at End-of-Life – Vermont have entered into a partnership agreement to work together toward a 2011 Death with Dignity legislative effort. The agreement is a product of nearly 10 years of collaborative history between the two organizations. Dick Walters, President of the Vermont organization, said: “With Peter Shumlin as Governor in favor of Death with Dignity – with legislative leaders in favor – with close to a majority of the House and Senate in favor, we have every expectation that we can gain the few additional votes we need to pass Death with Dignity legislation in 2011.”

During the campaign, Shumlin recounted the story of a terminally ill woman who urged him to support end-of-life choice. “I can’t imagine in my wildest dreams why government would get in between that woman ... and her doctor,” Shumlin said. “[End-of-life choices] are really important issues that should also be discussed in this campaign. Brian [Dubie, his opponent] believes the government should regulate [abortion], I don’t. I also feel that way about end-of-life choices.”

C&C of WI was at the Convention of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG)

Dick Grum, long time board member of C&C of WI, manned the C&C of WI literature table at the CWAG convention at the Radisson Hotel in Green Bay on June 29 and 30, 2010. As he has done for many years in the past, Dick used the occasion to tell convention goers about C&C and end of life issues.

C&C of WI was at the UW—Madison Institute on Aging Annual Program

C&C of WI had a table, a display board and literature at this event too. It was held at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison and was attended by 550 persons. Jim Allen, John Eliason, Jim Greenwald and Susan Wester were on hand to tell attendees about C&C and to discuss end-of-life issues.

Shirley Robbins, C&C of WI Archivist, Needs Items for the Archives

Shirley has asked me to request members and supporters to watch for items about C&C and end-of-life issues in newspapers, magazines, online or from other sources and send them to her. Her address is 14 S. Roby Road, Madison, WI 53726. Her email address is robbnest@sbcglobal.net.

Correction: BBC Host, Who Claimed He Killer His Lover, Made the Story Up

You may remember the story about Ray Gosling that appeared in the March issue of the newsletter this year. The documentary film maker, in the midst of narrating a television program, told how he had killed his partner who was suffering terribly from AIDS.

The police conducted an extensive investigation that found no evidence to support the TV claim. Gosling admitted wasting police time and was given a 90 day suspended sentence.

Gosling said he wanted to say he was sorry to his lover’s family for the distress he had cause them.

The Guardian, 9/14/10

**Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin
Board of Directors**

President
Susan Wester(608) 442-1527
(smwester@mac.com)

Vice President—Speakers Bureau
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Dick Grum(608) 873-8277
(dickgrum2@yahoo.com)

Member-At-Large
Karen Deiro..... (414-282-3249)
(kdeiro@aol.com)

Newsletter Editor
Jim Greenwald(608) 233-7867
(cantlongreenwald@tds.net)

Program
Warren Olsen(608) 845-7972
(wolsen@chorus.net)

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Jim Allen Is A Staunch Supporter of Death with Dignity

Dr. James C. Allen, M.D. is a retired ophthalmologist, who has stayed out of the limelight, but has nevertheless done a lot for our cause.

Let me count the ways.

Jim has challenged the Wisconsin Medical Society to support the option of aid in dying for the terminally ill. He has raised the issue with various committees of the Society and at its general assembly. He has brought authorities from the West Coast to address committees. He

has rallied doctors, he knows supports our side of the issue, to declare their support. Jim has not convinced the WMS to change its position, but he has laid the ground work for them to eventually come around.

Jim has single handedly gotten the Wisconsin Democratic Party, in resolutions and platform positions, to be on record supporting death with dignity.

Within the chapter, he has done the spade work to set up pulpit appearances these past summers for Rev. Mathew Nelson, a C& C board member, to address Unitarian congregations around the state.

He has contributed financially to the cause.

I received an email from Jim recently. He belongs to a retirees chapter of a union for state employes. The chapter is always looking for speakers for its monthly meetings. He

asked me if he can give them my name as a speaker. I was quick to let him know of course he can.

Hats off to you Jim: you have done a great job. Anyone wishing to send her or his personal thank you to Jim, can send it to him at



Jim Allen with Compassion & Choices President Barbara Combs Lee, last year in Madison

1223 Wellesley Road, Madison, WI

53705-2231 or contact him at (608) 233-8798 or at jcallen1@wisc.edu.

Report on Sept. Meeting: Dr. Susan Wester M.D. Discussed, Among Other Things, Dying and the Oregon Death with Dignity Law

Susan traced dying through the ages. "In recent times, the principal causes of death are heart attacks, strokes and chronic diseases." Thirty percent of Medicaid funds are spent for the care of patients during the last six months of their lives, she said.

In Oregon, the reason patients give most often for using the Death with Dignity Law is the fear of the loss of autonomy and the loss of dignity, she said.

Susan said that the number of requests from patients to use the Law in Oregon annually has risen recently, but the total number remains small. The Law has resulted in the greater use of hospice and better pain management, she said.

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

Thirty-eight (38) supporters responded to our September Appeal contributing a total of \$1,615. Thank you so very, very much. Your continuing and generous support permits our chapter to continue to carry on our program of keeping you informed through the newsletter and our quarterly meetings and attempting to reach a larger public through appearances at conventions and providing speakers to interested groups. Contributors to this appeal included:

K. K. Anderson	Madison
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Ede Borek	Black River Falls
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David & Cheryl Lemke	Deerfield
John & Jane McAndrews	Oshkosh
Mary Jo McBrearty	Kohler
William Reinhardt	Fond du Lac
Mary L. Siberz	Middleton
Rose B. Smith	Madison
Gabriella Spencer	Manitowoc

We hope to reach more individuals this coming year by contacting service, church, senior and any other group that would like to hear about death with dignity. After accepting invitations to speak, we will give assignments to qualified persons who have indicated their willingness to speak to such groups. This project will require that we have funds to send out letters to groups that might want a speaker and to pay travel expenses to our speakers.

Please donate to the December End of the Year Fund Raising Appeal. Donations are tax deductible for federal and state income tax purposes. If you are able to make a large donation, please consider doing so. If you would like to organize a Christmas fund raising party, please consider doing so and let us know.

Join our efforts to make death, not an unspoken and feared dread, but a humane, gentle end to a full life, if that is a person's choice.

Oregon End of Life Expert Discusses Aid in Dying: By Chelsea Krotzer of the Billings, MT, Gazette: October 25, 2010

Barbara Glidewell of Portland, Oregon, spoke to a small group at the Parmly Billings Library recently about death with dignity in Montana.

Nursing students from Montana State University were among a group that met at Parmly Library to discuss a topic they may run into while on the job: death with dignity.

A crowd of about 50 listened to Glidewell, who has been involved in the death with dignity movement since it began in Oregon 12 years ago.

The presentation was one of about 20 that have been made around the state since May through Compassion and Choices.

“Our goal is to provide information on what the experience was like in Oregon in light of what is going on with the Baxter decision and the upcoming legislative session, “ said Jessica Grennan, campaign manager with Compassion and Choices. “We feel we owe it to Montanans to provide information.”

Robert Baxter of Billings died Dec. 8, 2008, the same day that a state district judge in Helena ruled that he had the right to have a physician help him die. Baxter had been suffering during the last stages of an aggressive leukemia.

“The supreme court ruled that it currently does not go against public policy for a mentally competent, terminally ill adult to ask for a prescription to hasten death,” Grennan said. “It’s legal in Montana.”

The goal of the presentation is to codify the law, Grennan said.

“We are hoping to get something like what is going on in Washington and Oregon,” she said.

Grennan said another tour is being planned with a focus on central Montana.

“We want to make sure that folks know the laws and know what to expect during the legislative session,” Grennan said

Compassion & Choices Membership Form	<p>Yes! I want to join Compassion & Choices *</p> <p>___ \$45 Individual ___ \$60 Couple ___ \$450 Life Member ___ \$600 Life Couple Member</p>	
	<p><i>Please supply complete address:</i></p> <p>Name/s _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____</p> <p>State Zip _____</p> <p>Telephone () _____</p> <p>E-Mail _____</p>	<p>Make Checks Payable to and Send To:</p> <p>Compassion & Choices P.O. Box 101810 Denver, CO 80250-1810</p> <p>Or Call: 1-800-247-7421 Visa or MasterCard accepted</p> <p>Dues are not tax deductible</p>
	<p>* 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.</p>	

News from C&C USA: New York Palliative Care Information Act Is Law

This “Right to Know” legislation ensures that terminally ill patients be told of their rights to hospice care and options for pain and symptom management, and to receive a prognosis with and without life-sustaining treatment. It’s a far-reaching, comprehensive bill, even stronger than a similar law C&C championed in California, on which it is modeled.

Unlike in California, the New York bill puts the responsibility on the doctor or other health care provider to volunteer a complete menu of care options, without having to wait for the patient to ask first. This is a huge victory for patient-centered care, and will protect patients who are reluctant to confront their doctors with difficult questions.

Right to Know laws address a major concern for terminally ill patients and their families, who often face the most important

decision of their lives “how to live their final days” without being informed of their legal rights and medical options. Knowledge empowers patients and gives them comfort. They put into patients’ hands the information and power to choose what will make a meaningful difference as they seek a dignified death.

C&C helped draft and advocate for the New York Palliative Care Information Act signed into law on August 15, 2010 by Governor David Paterson. The Act provides crucial protections for New Yorkers, and its passage may well encourage other states across the nation to take up similar measures.

Barbara Coombs Lee

President, Compassion & Choices, USA
www.compassionandchoices.org

See address label for your membership expiration date.

<http://www.compassionandchoiceswisc.org>

Compassion & Choices of Wisconsin, Inc.
P.O. Box 7563, Madison Wisconsin, 53707

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