

## **Hoosiers should have choice of dying with dignity**

Carrol Krause (November 11, 1958 – January 29, 2016)

Because I have terminal cancer, I've spent much thought on the subject of death with dignity (often called doctor-assisted dying). Doctor-assisted dying is currently available only to residents of Vermont, Oregon, California and Washington. Many believe that doctor-assisted dying is tantamount to suicide. But my situation is unlike that of a healthy person who kills himself. I do not end a healthy life filled with promise. Instead, I seek to hasten the inevitable and painful death that looms on my horizon.

After carefully considering the question, I would choose physician-assisted death in a heartbeat, knowing what I am soon to endure. But it's illegal in Indiana. And I do not have the resources, strength or time that would be necessary to move to another state and adopt new residency.

I have an extremely rare and incurable form of ovarian cancer. After undergoing major surgery and several chemotherapies over the past 22 months, tumors have spread throughout my abdomen. A large inoperable mass is impinging painfully upon my bladder and intestines, and is slowly choking off and blocking these vital systems.

An assisted death would spare me horrible suffering, but it's against the law for any physician to help me make a dignified early exit. Why do lawmakers believe that dying people need to experience every possible moment of pain? And why must other people's emotional beliefs and religious scruples (which I do not share) dictate how I spend the end of my own life?

In this country, putting down a suffering pet is considered to be a humane and ethical solution to terminal illness. But we compel dying humans to suffer agonies that we would never permit in our own cats and dogs.

Perhaps you believe that human life has a sanctity that must not be tampered with. That's fine, and I respect your religious values. But an enlightened society should not permit followers of a single religion to enforce their religious beliefs upon others, nor should those religious tenets be incorporated into the default government over all Americans. I believe that subjecting me and my family to extended suffering serves no useful governmental purpose and displays a profound lack of compassion.

I hold that death with dignity should be legalized at the federal level because it's a question of the most essential human right of all: control of the weakest citizens over their own fate. The Swiss, the Belgians and the Dutch have it exactly right when it comes to compassion for the suffering. After a waiting period of several months, and an examination of the medical records, patients are allowed to gently and painlessly pass away in the presence of their family and friends. We need this option in the United States.

It's too late to save me from a horrible fate. But it's not too late to save your beloved parent, sibling, child or friend from unnecessary suffering. Contact your legislators and request death with dignity in Indiana.

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