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Palliative Care Association of Grenada

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Weekly Newsletter

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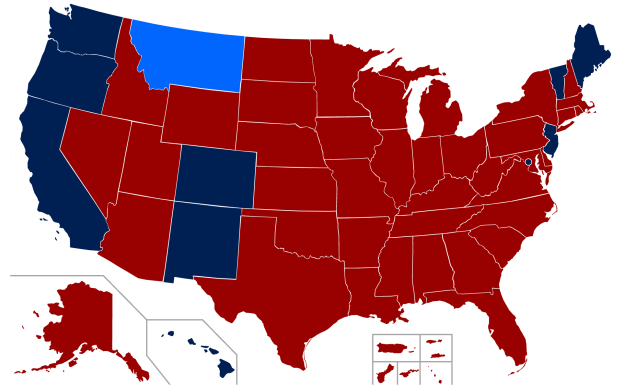
Current Regulations for Physician-Assisted Death in the U.S.

"One should die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly."

-Friedrich Nietzsche

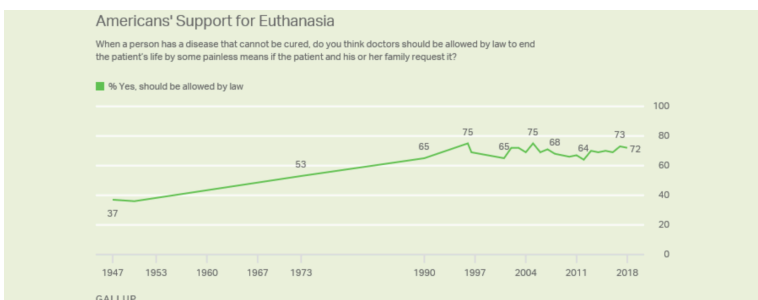
Physician-assisted death, also known as medical aid in dying, refers to the practice of prescribing lethal doses of medication to patients with terminal illness so they can facilitate when and how they die. Although similar to euthanasia, physician-assisted death (PAD) only provides the means of death without direct involvement by the physician in the act of death itself. PAD has always been an area of intense debate, especially in the United States, but has been gaining ground in certain jurisdictions. As of 2023, PAD is legal in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Washington D.C. But where did legalization of PAD start and where will it go in the near future?

Legalization of PAD in the United States first occurred in 1994 when 51% of voters in Oregon approved the use of PAD in terminally ill patients. However, it would not be until 1997, after numerous federal injunctions, before PAD was first implemented in the state. At that time, approval ratings of PAD amongst Oregonians had increased to 60% (Ganzini 2022). Following the controversial amendment, Oregon would stand as the lone state with legal PAD for over a decade. It would not be until 2008 before Washington's Death with Dignity Act would be passed, making the second state with legal PAD policies. In the next 11 years, the remaining



jurisdictions would approve PAD or make amendments to their Acts allowing for non-residents to utilize this resource. As of 2023, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania are deliberating their own Death with Dignity amendments (Death with Dignity, 2023). If passed, this would permit the use of PAD in over a quarter of the country, allowing patients an ever-increasing amount of autonomy over how they live and how they die.

Regulations for physician-assisted death vary from state to state with each having their own specific laws and requirements for eligibility. While this topic is still heavily debated, in the 28 years since the first legalization of PAD, the U.S. has made significant progress in increasing the capabilities of physicians while also increasing the autonomy that patients have over their life and its end. Furthermore, with increasing amendments in state's laws over death with dignity, the perspectives of the American population are changing in support for PAD. According to a survey conducted by Gallup Inc., 72% of Americans support doctors being able to assist patients in ending life with painless means (Brenan, 2018). With this continued, and increasing, support amongst the American people, it is imperative that citizens continue to monitor this highly debated topic and its progress in the coming years.



References

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2. Brenan, Megan. "Americans' Strong Support for Euthanasia Persists." Gallup.Com, Gallup, 31 May 2018, news.gallup.com/poll/235145/americans-strong-support-euthanasia-persists.aspx.
3. Death With Dignity. "State Statuses." Death With Dignity, 20 Oct. 2023, deathwithdignity.org/states/.