

## ISSUE UPDATE

### Physician-Assisted Suicide

#### LEGISLATIVE STATUS:

On Thursday, March 7, 2002, after 2 1/2 hours of excellent debate, the House of Representatives passed HB 2487, which would legalize physician-assisted suicide (PAS). There was strong, bipartisan opposition with 20 NO votes (another NO vote was absent -Pendleton) and 6 yes votes, with reservations. On March 8, 2002, the bill was transmitted to the Senate. Senate Health Committee Head, Sen. David Matsuura (Hilo) does not plan to hear the bill.

#### WHY THE OPPOSITION TO PAS?

- ◆ PAS would forever transform the role of physician from one who preserves life to one who takes life. This will lead to a speedy deterioration of the physician-patient relationship and will adversely affect the entire healthcare delivery system.
- ◆ PAS would leave society's most vulnerable poor, sick, elderly and disabled populations subject to abuse and coercion—no matter what the proposed "safeguards." The slippery slope to involuntary PAD would become a reality, just as it has in the Netherlands.
- ◆ Any so-called right to die would inevitably lead to a duty to die, with elderly patients feeling the subtle (and, perhaps, not so subtle) obligation to end their lives prematurely so as not to be a burden to their families and society.
- ◆ PAS would immeasurably diminish the sanctity and value of all human life.

**INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND AUTONOMY?** PAS is not simply about the rights of an individual person. Rather, a second person is required to become involved in the taking of human life—and society is asked to condone it. The practice of medicine is forced to transform itself and vulnerable populations are forced to accept the risk of abuse and coercion.

**POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES?** Hawaii Family Forum would like to see more effective pain management, better diagnosis and treatment of depression, and the increased use of hospice care—NOT PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE!.

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## What You Can Do!

1. Pray for your elected officials.
2. Educate yourself on the issue of physician-assisted suicide. In you need additional information, please contact the Hawaii Family Forum.
3. Request a copy of the HFF newsletter. Contact Eva Simmons via the number listed on the reverse side of this flyer. E-mail requests may be sent to: [info@hawaiifamilyforum.org](mailto:info@hawaiifamilyforum.org).
4. Contact your Senator and tell him or her to ensure that physician-assisted suicide is not legalized in Hawaii.
5. If you need assistance with finding out who your Senator is, please call us at (808) 230-2100. We will be more than happy to help you.

**For those who equate PAS to death with dignity—  
they would do well to heed the words of  
former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D.**

**“Let those who seek death with dignity beware,  
lest they lose life with dignity in the process.”**

Contact your State Representative and Senator.  
Log onto: <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov> or call  
the Public Access Room at (808) 587-0478  
For more information on the legislative process.

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