

## **CALIFORNIA RIGHT TO LIFE**

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### **Assisted Suicide Comes to California?**

Guest Editorial by Andrew Porter

- *Assisted Suicide Bill*
- *Terri Schiavo to be starved*
- *"Million Dollar Baby" movie*

So-called "assisted suicide" is back, in the Legislature, in an Assembly bill, AB 654, sponsored by Patti Berg (D, Santa Rosa - Ukiah) and Lloyd Levine (D, Van Nuys). This issue has been debated in California in the past, in Proposition 161 (1992) and Assemblywoman Dione Aroner's bill AB 1592 (2000). AB 654 is sponsored politically by the right-to-die movement, in hopes of expanding the Oregon legislation of a few years ago to other states.

A broad coalition opposes the bill, much more than just the Catholic Church: the California Medical Association, and groups representing illegals, the poor, the uninsured, and the disabled. Many of those groups represent voters who are predominantly Democratic, and many of them bristle if you accuse them of being pro-life. This is not just pro-life opposition. We accept agreement where there is agreement, as there is against euthanasia and anything that could lead to euthanasia, and discuss other issues elsewhere. Please visit the coalition's website, <http://www.ca-aas.com>.

The arguments for the bill are the usual appeal to pity, together with "safeguards." The "safeguards" are not really credible. The provision promised in Assemblymember Berg's constituent newsletter that only the patient may take the medicine has quietly been withdrawn, after I pointed out in a hearing at the Capitol that the ADA mandates that those unable to take the medicine by themselves have a right to be given the lethal medicine by someone else.

The bill has revealing language in other places: it prohibits people from exercising "undue" influence over a patient to get the patient to ask for a lethal prescription (that would be a felony!), but it says nothing about "due" influence, telling someone that suicide might be a rational option in medically

unattractive circumstances. So that safeguard is not only vacuous but provides a loophole wide enough to drive a truck through.

The appeals to pity are usually made on behalf of *other people*, relatives who died "without dignity." In other words, the proponents of the bill would like permission to allow (i.e., invite) their ailing relatives to kill themselves, and they want some moral blessing and legitimation for this move.

To quote from the Not Dead Yet website ([www.notdeadyet.org](http://www.notdeadyet.org)),

"People already have the right to refuse unwanted treatment, and suicide is not illegal. What we oppose is a public policy that singles out individuals for legalized killing based on their health status. This violates the Americans With Disabilities Act, and denies us the equal protection of the law."

Imagine the reaction to a bill that wanted to legalize assisted suicide, but only for Jews. The outcry would be heard way out beyond the orbit of Jupiter! Or imagine the reception a bill would get that would allow only state legislators to get help committing suicide? So why on the basis of health? This is not prejudiced? This is not discrimination against the disabled?

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Once the line between accepting death and seeking death is crossed, death is defined as a good that one person may give another, at first only by a doctor's prescription. But no law can contain the giving of a "good" by one person to another, as experience in the Netherlands has shown. Experience in Oregon is shrouded in secrecy in the name of patient privacy, and it is only eight years old, and has had unsympathetic scrutiny from euthanasia

opponents. It took a lot longer than just eight years for the Dutch practice to degenerate as far as it has (casual euthanasia of very sick patients without even asking the patient's permission).

The proponents of the bill have tried more than once to claim that all opposition comes from the Catholic Church, and that the churches are trying to impose their values on society. But the churches could not do that even if they commanded all the power of the state. The

Church's teaching is that we are to be pro-life when life hurts, in **all** of life, not just when some would like to get rid of inconvenient others in abortion or euthanasia. The churches' opposition to utilitarian homicides is merely the minimum necessary for a society that is civil and not barbaric, the minimum necessary to protect the dignity and right to life of everybody.

When some are thrown to the wolves, everybody is graded in degrees, from life-worthiness to wolf-worthiness, and that is the very opposite of dignity. It would be too inconvenient for proponents of so-called "assisted suicide" to contemplate dignity and respect as things that can be given to the dying person by people around him or her.

In other news, Terri Schiavo has been scheduled to be dehydrated and starved beginning March 18. There are still legal challenges in progress, but the trial court has declared there will be no more stays of execution of its original orders. Details can be found by visiting <http://www.terrisfight.org> or <http://www.notdeadyet.org>.

The latter website also has details in protest of Clint Eastwood's movie, "Million Dollar Baby," in which he euthanizes a quadriplegic. Having seen the movie, I would say that it is embarrassingly sloppy in its technical details, and its flagrant inaccuracies always work to imply that it is better to be dead than disabled. The disability movement has renamed it "Million Dollar Bigot," which is pretty apt, given the plot of the movie and Eastwood's history of dislike of the disabled and opposition to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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#### **WHO IS CALIFORNIA RIGHT TO LIFE?**

This is the newsletter of California Right to Life Education Fund, a 501-c-3 organization established to educate the public about pro-life issues. We are an affiliate of the American Life League, headed by Judie Brown. Donations to us are tax-deductible and can be sent to P.O. Box 4343, Walnut Creek, CA 94596-4343.

California Right to Life Committee, Inc. is a 501-c-4 organization providing information on legislative issues affecting the right to life and pro-life political advocacy. CRLC, Inc. is not permitted, under IRS regulations, to offer a tax deduction for donations. \$24.99 annually is requested for a subscription to the CRLC legislative email updates list and can be sent to 1920 Monument Blvd #309, Concord, CA 94520.

Both share the same "no-exceptions" beliefs and the same dedication to promoting the Culture of Life, respecting all innocent human life from the single-cell stage to natural death.

## **A Day at the Mall**

By Cecelia Cody

At a recent mall table at Sunvalley in Concord Ca. a lady came up and thanked us for being there. She then began to tell us her story.

It was 1974; she was 16 years old and pregnant. So she visited the only place she knew, Planned Parenthood. She recounted how an older woman employed by Planned Parenthood "counseled" her that her option was to have an abortion; no other option was even presented. Being a scared 16 year-old, and seeing no other option, she scheduled the abortion...HOWEVER, riding home on the bus she felt something was not right about this "Choice" of abortion. Something within her told her there was another option.

Her older brother took her in and she delivered a beautiful baby boy, who is now a wonderful young man! She subsequently did get married and has several other children, yet I got the impression that her oldest son is her special joy of her life. She thanked us for being at Sunvalley that day to show today's youth that there is another option than abortion.

Thanks to all of you who send in contributions that allow us to distribute about \$50 worth of literature on an average mall day. And a special thank you to all who help staff the table. If you are interested in assisting in this worthwhile effort, contact this office for information and time of our next scheduled mall table.

## **AROUND THE OFFICE**

Do we have your current e-mail address? We try and cover the major pro-life issues in our newsletter, and keep you up to date on the high points. However things often happen quickly and several times a week we send out updates of recent happenings. To keep informed of the latest (Terri Schiavo as an example) please provide us with your e-mail.

Information tables are one of our primary outreach projects. We had a table at the Walk for Life, and are out at Sunvalley Mall one Saturday each month. If you are interested in starting a mall table in your area or serving at an existing mall table, contact our office for further information.

### **\$300 Scholarly Achievement Award in English Studies**

University Faculty for Life is now accepting submissions from college or university students for excellent research writing on any aspect of rhetoric or literature from a life-affirming perspective. (To view last year's winning essay, please consult <http://www.uffl.org>.) **Deadline: 14 May 2005.** For further information, contact this office.