

Booth Gardner

Governor, State of Washington

1984-1992

Dear Friend,

In the midst of agony, there is potential for peace.

When we or a loved one are experiencing unbearable suffering – past the point where there is hope for recovery – there is a grace inside our humanity that is capable of saying,

“It’s time.”

When that somber moment arrives, shouldn’t the law be on our side? Isn’t it the *duty* of society’s contract to allow this most personal decision to be made with peace and dignity?

Sadly – *wrongly* – the right to choose death with dignity does not exist across most of our country. In all but one U.S. state, the law forbids a patient of sound mind and terminal illness to determine when their suffering should end.

The time has arrived to change that inhuman reality. Voters in my home state of Washington can pass a sensible, rational “Death With Dignity” law this November.

When they do, it will be the first time in the 21st century that a “Death With Dignity” law has been approved in America. And it will bring each of us – no matter where we live – one step closer to the unfettered personal liberty with which each one of us has been endowed.

My name is Booth Gardner, and I am the chairman of the “Yes on I-1000” campaign in Seattle, Washington. I am also a former Governor of this, my home state. At the age of 71, I am engaged in a final political campaign to pass this law by referendum this fall.

Success will make Washington the second U.S. state, after Oregon, to affirm this profoundly personal human right.

I am asking for your help. Because as personal as an end-of-life decision should be, the right to make it has become a political football. Opponents of the right are vehement and determined. Their reasons range from well-meaning to appallingly invasive. In their zeal, they distort the truth, raise false alarm, and denigrate our souls with their fear.

That is why those of us who seek to preserve life’s decisions for our selves and our loved ones must rally together to affirm this all-too-alienable right. Accordingly, I hope you will join me in supporting “Yes on I-1000” by making a personal contribution of \$40, \$75, \$100 – or even more – to this campaign today.

(over, please)

Y E S O N I - 1 0 0 0

A Sound Local Step toward a Necessary National Standard

The right to “death with dignity” has had a perilous journey in America. Where other countries have long since adopted the laws and safeguards necessary to ensure this fundamental human right, the United States has struggled and lagged behind.

As recently as 30 years ago, most states did not recognize the right to sign a Living Will. Well-organized opposition forced countless Americans to suffer the indignity of being kept alive artificially by tubes and machines.

From Karen Ann Quinlan in 1976 to Nancy Cruzan in 1990 to Terry Schiavo in 2005, the right to death with dignity has been secured incrementally through the courage of court plaintiffs, the compassion of their legal and medical advocates, and the principled support of people like you.

Today, a Living Will is considered a straightforward and mandatory document, legally recognized in all 50 states. It offers each and every one of us the right to set our own limits on being kept alive artificially. A Living Will does not, however, address the right to make a choice about ending our lives when we are terminally ill and in unbearable pain or anguish.

Many Americans, of course, make such decisions quietly with the support of their loved ones and physicians. Compassion, privacy, discretion and the informed awareness of one’s own medical prognosis has allowed end-of-life decisions to be made rationally behind closed doors.

Yet with the exception of less than 300 Oregon citizens in the last ten years, each of those countless patients and their doctors has broken the law.

Many more patients who have sought to end their suffering yet been unable to gain the consent of their physicians have been left with no legal recourse ... no alternative but to endure their suffering and anguish.

Downed
This inequity and illegality must change. With your support, the state of Washington will send a message that it will.

What “Death With Dignity” Means

A “Death With Dignity” law will allow mentally competent, terminally ill adults – with six months or less to live – to obtain and *self-administer* life-ending medication.

As written for the Washington ballot, the “Death With Dignity” law is substantially identical to the Oregon statute that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2006. The Oregon law works. Its proper balance of clarity and safeguards has enabled it to fully serve its intended purpose: to secure the right to death with dignity under the law and ensure invaluable peace of mind to the terminally ill, while including appropriate restrictions before a patient can make use of its provisions.

As a result, few people have actually used the law – just 292 Oregonians since the law was approved by voters in 1997. Many more, however, have had the option to consider using the law – a

(next page, please)

liberty that has provided them with the comforting sense of control over their end-of-life experience.

In order to exercise that control, the Death With Dignity law requires that very specific safeguards be met. The patient must be at least 18 years old and:

- mentally capable of making and communicating health care decisions;
- diagnosed with a terminal illness that will lead to death within six months;
- supported in their decision by two physicians;
- informed of all feasible alternatives including comfort care, hospice care and pain control;
- be acting of their own free will;
- make their request both orally and in writing, before witnesses, subject to a specified waiting period;
- understand their right to revoke their decision at any time.

Why no referral **In crafting the law, every precaution possible has been taken to prevent a patient from acting in haste, under pressure, without complete knowledge of alternatives, or in the absence of a truly terminal illness.**

For example, in my case – suffering from incurable Parkinson’s disease for more than 14 years, with the steadily increasing loss of basic functions – I would not be eligible to access the Death With Dignity law. My condition – however torturous and difficult to bear – is not terminal.

This bright-line restriction is the best safeguard against the possible abuse of the law by people who are not near to dying. And that brings me to another common-sense fact about a Death With Dignity law – a fact routinely overlooked by its opponents as well as some in the media:

Death with dignity is not suicide. Nor is it *assisted* suicide, or *physician-assisted* suicide. By its very nature, suicide is the irrational act of a person choosing to end their life before it’s time. For the terminally ill, death is already a reality. Cancer and similar incurable conditions are taking their lives, not the patients themselves. A Death With Dignity act simply enables a patient with less than six months to live to make a rational decision to end unbearable suffering.

Opponents of Death With Dignity and I-1000 promote the “suicide” canard because it’s inflammatory. In truth, it’s insulting to the remarkably courageous individuals who are struggling with terminal illness and enduring unimaginable suffering.

What it Will Take to Win the Right to “Death with Dignity”

On its merits alone, virtually everyone who understands the facts about the right of the terminally ill to make end-of-life decisions supports the “Death With Dignity” law.

Yet as I said earlier, the opponents of this fundamental human right are zealous and more than willing to distort the truth and use scare, shock and shame to prevail. The power of their tactics – and the staggering sums of money they are willing to spend on their campaigns – is the major reason why just one U.S. state has enacted a “Death With Dignity” law.

(over, please)

Here in Washington, we are prepared to win this fight:

- ** We have assembled an outstanding team of campaign professionals skilled in educating and motivating the public.
- ** We have conducted polling which shows that 64% of Washington voters support a "Death With Dignity" law.
- ** We are developing effective television, radio and print advertising, as well as public education materials.
- ** We have recruited over 1000 volunteers eager to talk with their neighbors.
- ** We are ready to reach out to elected officials, newspaper editorial boards, opinion leaders and grassroots activists.

And, we are reaching out to people like you – thoughtful, principled individuals who understand the profound importance of securing this human right. People who've watched a loved one suffer needlessly and pointlessly. People brave enough to look toward their own future, and the dignity with which they hope to end a life well-lived.

Your support of this historic campaign is essential. Our campaign budget is roughly \$1.0 million and we will need every penny. We fully expect to be outspent by the extreme elements that oppose us. And we know that we are also up against a statewide network of churches and other religious settings where the "Death With Dignity" law will be pummeled and distorted.

That is what makes your personal contribution so important. I would not have sat down to write you this letter otherwise.

This is a cause I feel in my heart, soul and conscience. It is worthy of each and every one of us who values life, treasures dignity, and wants never to be told by a stranger or a bureaucrat that our life is not our own, or that our suffering is the property of their law or morality.

For your spouse ... your parents ... your grandparents ... your children ... your neighbors ... *yourself* ... take a stand. Recognize that even a right this personal must be fought for and won. Support the cause of "Death With Dignity" by making a contribution to "Yes on I-1000" today.

With great appreciation,



Booth Gardner
Governor of Washington, 1984-92
Chairman, Yes on I-1000 Committee, 2008

P.S. The urgency of securing the right to "Death With Dignity" grows greater with each passing day. As medical science continues to advance, precious time is added to our lives. But an unintended consequence is the prolonging of the process of dying. More and more people with terminal illness will face the prospect of months of needless, excruciating suffering. It simply must be their legal right to make their own end-of-life decision. In 49 states, that right does not exist. With your support, it will, in one more – and a national movement will begin. Thank you for reading, thinking about, and supporting "Yes on I-1000."