

# THE Dignity Report

SUMMER 2021



- Victory in New Mexico • 2021 Legislative Priorities •
- Funding the Movement • Live Free AND Die •

## DEATH WITH DIGNITY

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#### On the Cover

*Peter Fernald and his wife of 35 years, Susan Kanor, enjoying the outdoors, one of their favorite activities, in July 2018.*

#### GIVE DIGNITY

Death with dignity laws provide peace of mind to qualified terminally ill residents in

**California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawai'i, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.**

You can help expand the option to all Americans with a generous contribution:

- a one-time or recurring gift;
- a gift in honor or in memory of a loved one;
- a gift of stock or mutual funds;
- a legacy gift.

To learn more and contribute, visit **[DeathwithDignity.org/Support](https://DeathwithDignity.org/Support)**.

***Thank you!***

520 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1220  
Portland, OR 97204-1510  
(503) 228-4415  
[info@deathwithdignity.org](mailto:info@deathwithdignity.org)  
**DeathwithDignity.org**

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# Victory in New Mexico



At Death with Dignity National Center we work to propel this movement forward. We profoundly believe that people suffering from terminal illness have the right to die on their own terms. In this issue, we are pleased to feature the latest state with an aid-in-dying law: New Mexico.

New Mexico is the tenth state to pass death with dignity legislation. HB47, the Elizabeth Whitefield End-of-Life Options Act, goes into effect June 18, 2021. As a member of the New Mexico End-of-Life Options Coalition, we provided grant funding, retained a lobbyist, and supported digital communications. We will also support implementation.

## **FROM THE GRASSROOTS TO THE GOVERNOR'S DESK**

Prioritizing resources, rallying advocates, and engaging legislators takes willpower and long-term visions for success. Barak Wolff, founding member of the New Mexico End-of-Life Options Coalition, recently caught up with us and shared some strategies, including building relationships, mobilizing resources during primary elections, gaining support from members of the House and Senate, and networking with key players at the Statehouse to eventually shift political leanings. These strategies created the right political environment to achieve bill passage.

## **THE SLOW BURN**

Social movements like ours take years of dedicated effort and endless rounds of refocusing. Thanks to devoted advocates and generous supporters, New Mexico residents living with terminal illness will have the right to choose how they die.

This victory will continue to inspire us in collective efforts with other states pursuing death with dignity legislation.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PS' followed by a flourish.

Peg Sandeen, Executive Director

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# Lay of the Land: Death with Dignity's Legislative Priorities in 2021

People ask us all the time when a death with dignity law will pass in their state. The answer is "Well, it depends." Passing a new law often takes many legislative sessions, heroic grassroots organizing, steady national support, savvy political expertise, and loads of persistence. This year we're closely engaged in five active state campaigns.

**ARIZONA** The Dignity50 State Leadership Incubator is providing technical assistance and fiscal sponsorship to Arizona End-of-Life Options as it builds momentum statewide. While none of the three introduced bills moved this session, that didn't stop our partners in Arizona, who are diligently creating a broad network of support across the state.

**MASSACHUSETTS** During the 2020 legislative session, we witnessed a successful committee vote. This year, we retained an experienced local lobbyist to work directly with bill sponsors in developing strategic methods for bolstering legislative efforts. Once a bill gains traction, it's important to bring even more vitality to the effort.

**NEVADA** We engaged local political experts and supporters to introduce a solid bill by a highly committed sponsor. Our executive director, Peg Sandeen, served on the sponsor's expert panel during the hearing. Due to the collaborative effort, we doubled our grassroots base in Nevada this year.

**NEW MEXICO** We worked as a member of the New Mexico End-of-Life Options Coalition, granting funds, retaining political experts, and building capacity. After years of statewide collaboration and determined work by the coalition, we are pleased to announce HB47, the Elizabeth Whitefield End-of-Life Options Act, will go into effect June 18, 2021. Congratulations, New Mexico!

**NEW YORK** We have expanded networking statewide and are engaging with political experts focused on campaign strategies to support bill sponsors and advocates in promoting introduced legislation. We launched aggressive and sophisticated digital communications to ensure New York legislators can no longer ignore the will of the people.

Each session, we track legislative efforts across the country, including communicating with constituents, analyzing hearings, and educating the public. This year, there were four states with proposed amendments, all focused on reducing barriers to aid-in-dying laws:

**CALIFORNIA (SB380)** seeks to reduce the patient waiting period to 48 hours, remove paperwork requirements, and make the law permanent. Their legislative session ends in September 2021.

### STATE WITH...

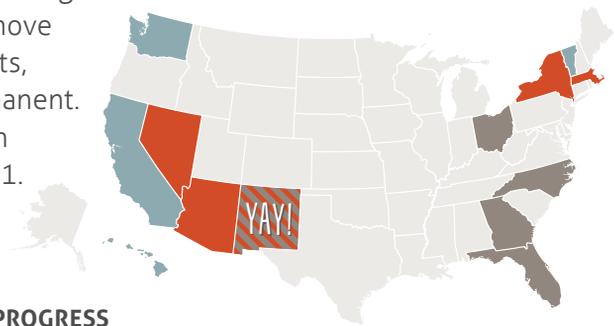
- **ACTIVE CAMPAIGN IN PROGRESS**
- **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO EXISTING LAW**
- **GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS WE'RE SUPPORTING**

The following proposed amendments all stalled during this legislative session:

**HAWAII (SB839)** proposed reducing the waiting period to 15 days with a waiver option, removing the required mental health assessment, and allowing additional professions to participate.

**VERMONT (S74)** aimed to allow telemedicine, eliminate the prescription 48-hour waiting period, and strengthen physician immunity language within the existing bill.

**WASHINGTON (HB1141)** would have shortened the waiting period to 72 hours with a waiver option, allowed additional professions to participate, and increased general patient accessibility. 🗳️



To track the current legislative session, visit [DeathwithDignity.org/14917-2](https://DeathwithDignity.org/14917-2)

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# Funding the Movement

## Announcing the 2021 Recipients of Dignity50 State Leadership Incubator Grants

Every year, Death with Dignity National Center awards grants to grassroots advocacy organizations through our State Leadership Incubator program. This year we awarded **\$21,250** to five organizations in five states. We are excited to fund the growing movement for death with dignity across the country. 📖



**New Mexico End-of-Life Options Coalition** will receive \$5,500 to assist in implementing the Elizabeth Whitefield End-of-Life Options Act, which goes into effect June 18, 2021.

*“These funds will assist our coalition on our next journey of implementing our new law, through continued communication with supporters and website enhancements.”*

—BARAK WOLFF, FOUNDING MEMBER



**Dying Right North Carolina** will receive \$2,000 to revamp its website, allowing existing funds to be allocated elsewhere to promote death with dignity in North Carolina.

*“Wow!!! This is going to help us so much. I can't begin to express our gratitude for the support of Death with Dignity National Center.”*

—ED TIRYAKIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Florida Death with Dignity** will receive \$5,000 for marketing and promotion, including a website and printed materials.

*“This funding from Death with Dignity means a young organization with anxious volunteers hoping to educate Floridians about medical aid in dying will move further and faster toward reaching our goals.”*

—TONY RAY, GRASSROOTS LEADER



**Georgians for End of Life Options** will receive \$5,000 to establish and promote grassroots capacity building.

*“Georgians for End of Life Options will be able to create a strong social media presence, enabling us to identify support and provide education and resources.”*

—PHYLLIS TALLEY, VOLUNTEER ORGANIZER



**Ohio End of Life Options** will receive \$3,750 to develop educational videos focusing on the death with dignity movement.

*“We are excited to produce short videos showcasing stories of Ohioans who wanted this option, in hopes of raising awareness about medical aid in dying and to honor their memories.”*

—LISA VIGIL SCHATTINGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Visit [DeathwithDignity.org/Learn/Advocates](https://DeathwithDignity.org/Learn/Advocates) to learn more.

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# Self-Determination in the Sunshine State

## 5 Questions for Tony Ray, Florida Death with Dignity



*Tony Ray, Florida Death with Dignity volunteer, hard at work earlier this year.*

*A founding member of Florida Death with Dignity, Tony Ray is a retired building contractor and avid boater. His next trip will be aboard a 46' boat in Alaska with his wife.*

### 1. Why did you get involved?

With Terri Schiavo and Brittany Maynard, and other difficult family deaths, I felt there had to be a better way to treat the dying, which led me to support the aid-in-dying movement. Outside of family, there has never been anything in life I have been this committed to.

### 2. What does death with dignity mean to you?

Self-determination—stopping pain and loss of dignity when a person with a terminal illness chooses, regardless of religion or politics.

### 3. What will passing a death with dignity law in Florida accomplish?

It will result in less suffering for the person with the terminal illness. Can you imagine how many Floridians in “Heaven’s Waiting Room” will gain comfort in knowing they have a choice?

### 4. What actions are you taking?

Since starting in November 2020, our energetic volunteer base has grown rapidly while educating state residents. We hope to engage people face to face at speaking events as the COVID-19 crisis subsides.

### 5. How can others get involved?

Knowledge is the key to credible advocacy. Everyone should sign up on our website, [floridadeathwithdignity.org](http://floridadeathwithdignity.org), follow us on Facebook, and take the Dignity50 Roadmap Series to learn more about how medical aid in dying works. 📖

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For more information, visit **[DeathwithDignity.org/dignity50-roadmap-mini-series](http://DeathwithDignity.org/dignity50-roadmap-mini-series)**

# Live Free AND Die— Peacefully

**BY PETER FERNALD, NEW HAMPSHIRE**



*Peter, with his wife, Susan, in 2019.*

*Peter Fernald, former psychology professor at the University of New Hampshire, outdoor enthusiast, and advocate for passing HB1659, the New Hampshire Death with Dignity Act, died from cancer on March 29, 2021, at 85 years old. Earlier this year, he shared his story with us.*

I am an 85-year-old New Hampshire resident suffering and in the process of dying from cancer. If I had the option of physician-assisted dying, my current struggles might have been minimized substantially.

With regard to work and love, and many of life's pleasures, I have been blessed. For the most part, I have had a wonderful, pleasure-filled, exciting life. That is, until recently.

I have always prized quality over quantity of life, that is, a healthy, fully lived life over a longer, health-compromised life. Now, however, I am facing a very gradual, seemingly never-ending decline through more and more health difficulties. Simply having the option of physician-assisted dying, even if I do not exercise it, will give me peace of mind.

The New Hampshire motto, "Live Free or Die," provides an interesting perspective on HB1659. The first two words, "Live free," clearly declare the state's endorsement of choice. The third word, "or," in my view, often connotes dualistic, simplistic, polarized thinking, which can foster divisiveness and defensiveness. "And," on the other hand, promotes more complex thinking, inclusiveness, and cooperation. "And" offers the possibility of seeing the other person's perspective, coming together, connecting, joining, and moving forward together. My fervent wish is that all of us join together and support HB1659, so all residents living with a terminal illness in the Granite State can decide where they die, and die peacefully. 🙏

*This is an excerpt. To read the full story, visit our website and search "Peter Fernald."*

# Calling It Like It Is

## Donor Spotlight: John Crawford



*"I am 79 and have lived a wonderful life... Most importantly, I'm at peace with my Creator," shares John Crawford, Coast Guard veteran and Washington resident.*

*John Crawford, serving as Chairman of the Scholarship Committee for American Legion Post 234, dressed to the nines to present high school scholarships in June 2018.*

### **A PERSONAL CHOICE**

"I've seen plenty of death and dying. This includes serving 28 years in the U.S. Coast Guard, responding to boating accidents and aircraft crashes. But what bothered me more than pulling bodies out of water, was watching someone slowly die in a nursing home." John calls it like it is. "It is no surprise I am not going to live forever. When my quality of life is over, it is time to check out. I see no need to delay the inevitable." John intends to utilize Washington's Death with Dignity Act if and when he qualifies.

### **THE OBVIOUS ANSWER**

"I see nursing homes as warehousing for dying people...keeping the body alive. That's how my mother spent the last 11 years of her 101-year life. Up to age 90, she was a ball of energy and full of life." His sister also died two years ago of ALS. "It was agonizing for her and her family. Sadly, she lived in a state without death with dignity."

### **PROMOTING THE MOVEMENT**

John started at the advocacy level in Washington, gathering signatures for the ballot initiative years ago, and now consistently donates to the Death with Dignity National Center. "I hope that Death with Dignity can bring wide acceptance of the patient's personal choice."

Thank you for your support, John! 📖

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# Staff Recommendations:

## What We're Reading and Watching

We've been inspired recently by movements—our own aid-in-dying movement, of course, but also social justice organizing in general.



**ELIA LAWATSCH, DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS  
MANAGER/WRITER/SOCIAL WORKER**

***Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution, Netflix film***

This documentary follows a group of advocates who met at an innovative camp for teenagers with disabilities in upstate New York during the 1970s, spurring political activism that led to promoting equality through legislative actions still in place today. A great watch if you want to ignite your grassroots movement spirit!



**VAL LOVELACE, STATEWIDE CAMPAIGNS DIRECTOR**

***When My Time Comes, Diane Rehm, PBS film***

Diane Rehm's perspective on aid in dying is thorough and refreshingly candid. In under 60 minutes, she reveals the heart of the death with dignity movement without pulling any punches.



**PEG SANDEEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

***How to Practice, Ann Patchett, New Yorker essay***

A tale of grief and loss depicted through the lens of helping a friend sort and dispose of inherited belongings. 📖



520 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. #1220  
Portland, OR 97204

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# THE Dignity Report

“*Knowledge is the key  
to credible advocacy.*”

— TONY RAY,  
FLORIDA DEATH WITH DIGNITY VOLUNTEER



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