

THE

Death with
Dignity
NATIONAL CENTER

Dignity Report

A publication of the Death with Dignity National Center

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Two Decades of Death with Dignity
Empowering Local Activists
On Bicycle Races and Political Change

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Cover photo: Val Lovelace of *It's My Death* (left) with Eva Thompson, a terminally ill Mainer, in Augusta, Maine after the April 5, 2017 legislative hearing on LD 347, a Death with Dignity bill.

GIVE DIGNITY

You can support our work in many ways:

- an outright gift;
- a gift honoring a loved one;
- becoming a Sustaining Partner, giving monthly or quarterly;
- including us in your estate planning.

Please check the enclosed envelope for these options.

Thank you!

DEATH WITH DIGNITY NATIONAL CENTER

Respect the will of the people.

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On Bicycle Races and Political Change



It feels like just yesterday that I joined Death with Dignity National Center, less than a year before the January 2006 Supreme Court ruling that denied the Justice Department the right to prosecute Oregon pharmacists and physicians from practicing lawfully under the Oregon Death with Dignity Act.

Fast Forward to Now

In the past four years alone, California, Colorado, Vermont, and the District of Columbia passed assisted dying laws. In 2017, Death with Dignity legislation was introduced in 30 states. At times, it can seem as if the political landscape changed overnight. Of course, that's not how it happened.

Slow and Steady

In many ways, the challenge of long-term political organizing mirrors the long months of training I undertake before a bike race. During the hardest moments, as I push myself up a steep hill or prepare myself for another hundred-mile day in the heat, my cycling coach tells me that I'm stronger than I think. More often

than not, my strength comes from the people working alongside me.

Uphill Battles

When opponents win yet another round, it can be hard to find the motivation to keep going, and nearly impossible to keep cynicism at bay. But I've learned in my more than 20 years of work in social movements that it is precisely when things feel the worst that you have to push the hardest.

Team Work

In political campaigns and bicycle races, the focus is on crossing the finish line. But it is also about the work that happens before we declare victory. It is about coming together to celebrate, to cry, and to redouble our efforts to honor the human experience at the end of life for our loved ones and, one day, for all Americans.

Thank you for joining us on the journey.

Peg Sandeen, PhD, MSW

Two Decades of Death with Dignity

Today the Death with Dignity movement advances with greater speed than ever; this year alone, policy reform around physician-assisted dying was considered in an unprecedented 30 states.

Twenty years ago, in November, the effort to repeal the Oregon Death with Dignity Act failed and implementation of the law began. Its enactment established a template for other statutes and campaigns for end-of-life choice across the country, and we have worked to expand the policy nationwide, with four more states and Washington, D.C. adopting similar statutes between 2008 and 2016.

2008: Victory in Washington

In 2008, Washington voters passed Ballot Measure I-1000, the Washington Death with Dignity Act. Death with Dignity National Center Board member Eli Stutsman, JD, the lead drafter of the pioneering Oregon law, also authored the Washington law. We worked with End of Life Washington to form a coalition that developed and led the Yes on I-1000 campaign.

"Providing qualified, terminally ill patients with another end-of-life

option has changed the entire paradigm of end-of-life care in Washington."

—Robb Miller, Former Executive Director, End of Life Washington

2013: Bringing a "Basic Human Right" to Vermont

With the passage in 2013 of Act 39, the Patient Choice and Control at the End of Life Act, Vermont became the first state to enact a Death with Dignity law through the legislative process. We worked for more than a decade with the grassroots advocacy organization, Patient Choices Vermont, to pass the law.

"Death with Dignity is worthy of every one of us who values life and treasures dignity. The vast majority of people in Vermont want this basic human right, and the fact that we're able to offer it to them...is huge."

—Dick Walters (1925-2015), Founder, Patient Choices Vermont

2015: A Watershed Victory in California

The story of Brittany Maynard, a terminally ill Californian who moved to Oregon in the fall of 2014 to make use of the state's assisted dying law, catalyzed a

national movement for end-of-life choice. Death with Dignity Political Fund provided strategic support to legislators who worked tirelessly to pass a law. The End of Life Option Act passed in September 2015 and went into effect in June 2016, making Death with Dignity available to 1 in 6 Americans.

"I'm paying it forward, as Britt urged me to do, volunteering to help Death with Dignity's efforts for Americans in all the states to have the same option my daughter did."

—Deborah Ziegler, mother of Brittany Maynard and Death with Dignity National Center Board member

2016: A 2-to-1 Triumph in Colorado

On November 8, 2016, Coloradans passed Prop. 106, the End of Life Options Act, by a 2-to-1 margin, making it the fifth state to legalize medical aid in dying. Death with Dignity Political Fund ran radio ads in rural Colorado urging citizens to adopt this right for themselves.

"This was not a partisan issue. This was a human issue. People who are terminally ill in Colorado...now have a bill that will provide them peace

of mind and will give them more choices at the end of their life."

—Peg Sandeen, Executive Director, Death with Dignity National Center

2017: Death with Dignity Comes to D.C.

On February 21, 2017, the District of Columbia became the 6th jurisdiction in the United States to enact an Oregon-style assisted dying statute. The day came two years after we first started working with the law's sponsor, Councilmember Mary Cheh, to make this end-of-life option available to Washington, D.C. residents.

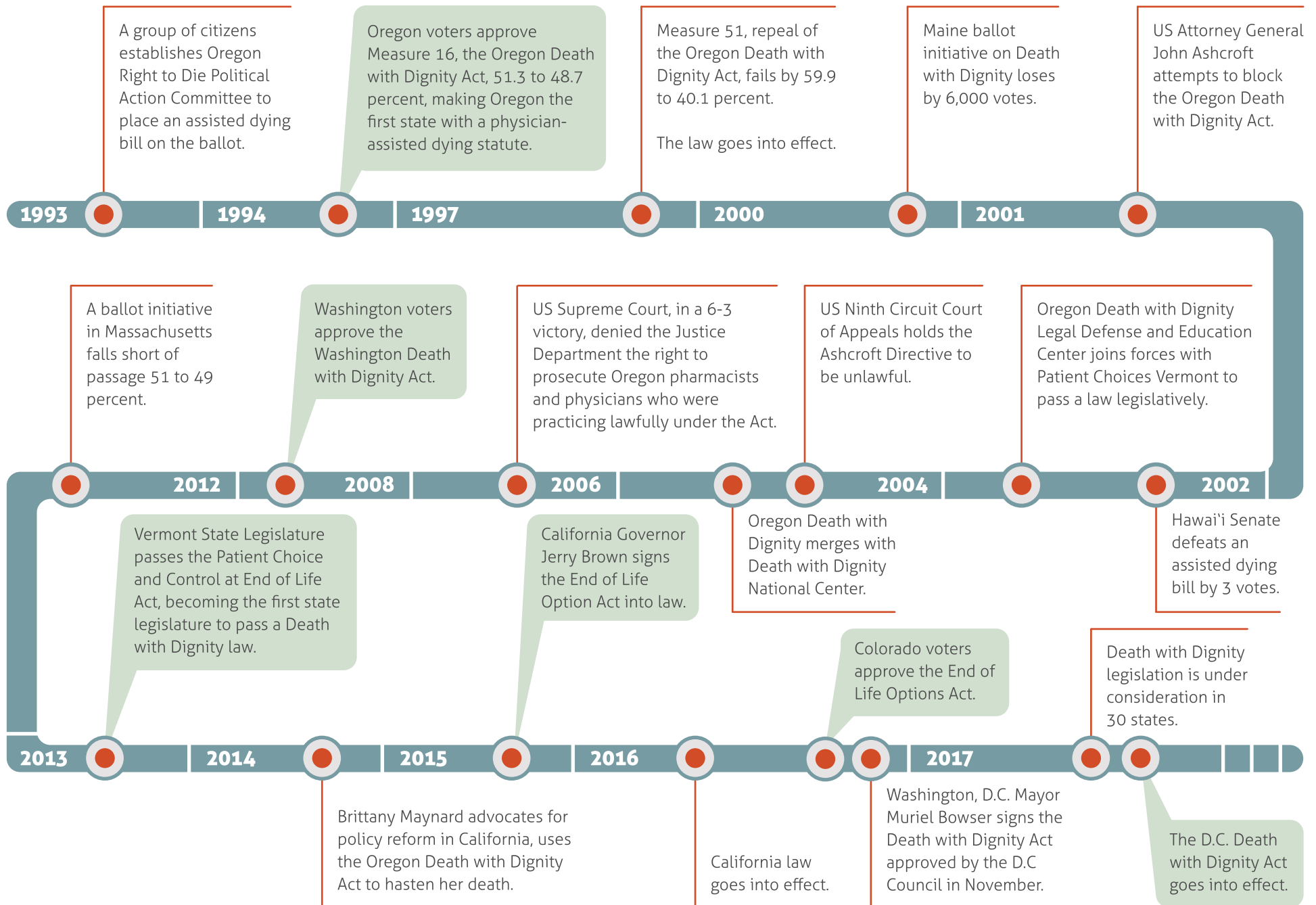
"The Council did not consider this measure lightly and dedicated over two years of careful deliberation to the Act."

—D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh, sponsor of the Washington Death with Dignity Act 



Find more stories about our past 20 years of advocacy at www.DeathWithDignity.org/Oregon20.

The Long and Winding Road: 20 Years of Advocacy



Donor Spotlight: Joyce Axelrod

A respected philanthropist, avid videographer, and active member of San Diego's Jewish community, Joyce lends her talents to a number of community causes and events. As chair of the Jewish Women's Foundation, Joyce worked to distribute grants to organizations addressing the needs of senior Jewish women. She has been named Volunteer of the Year by Jewish Family Services of San Diego; founded the San Diego Jewish Film Festival; and she produced short films for nonprofits free of charge.



Joyce Axelrod (photo courtesy of Jewish Community Foundation San Diego)

Joyce has supported Death with Dignity since 1994: the same year voters passed the Oregon Death with Dignity Act, the nation's first assisted dying law. "This has been an important issue for me since I was 30," Joyce says. "My father and husband had died and I felt that people should have the option to die without pain and suffering. I believe in having control over how we end our lives."

Joyce is inspired by our advocacy work around the country. "I am so heartened by the success of Death

with Dignity," she says. Recently, she made a long-term commitment to our organization, working with the San Diego Jewish Community Foundation to set up a donor advised fund.

We are honored to count Joyce among our most stalwart supporters.

If you are interested in learning more about setting up a donor advised fund to support the charities that inspire you, please call Meike Weyrauch, Director of Leadership Giving, at (360) 261-8983. ☎

Empowering Local Activists

From Hawai'i to North Carolina, Texas to Maine, we help nascent advocacy organizations build capacity and promote Death with Dignity legislation in their respective states. With generous philanthropic support, we are training new leaders through our Dignity50 State Leadership Incubator.

Stars in Texas

Cindy Merrill, who co-founded Texas Death with Dignity, participated in a pilot program, which brought together advocates from eight states for online trainings on communication and organizing. She says the lessons she learned through the trainings have helped her speak with confidence to supportive and skeptical audiences alike.

"The program has empowered me in so many ways," Cindy says.

The North Carolina Way

Dying Right North Carolina received a Technical Assistance grant from Death with Dignity. Co-founder and executive director Edmund Tiryakian appreciates the opportunity to connect with his fellow advocates.

"People share lessons and experiences," Ed says. "It gives me the feeling that I'm in an extended family. We're fighting the good fight."



Our new nationwide advocacy program Dignity50 has at its core a State Leadership Incubator that provides technical assistance and seed funding to grassroots advocates across the country. Pictured: Ed Tiryakian.

Next Steps for Dignity50

We are developing new online trainings to help prepare participants for the 2018 legislative session and will be adding new groups to the Incubator. Advocates from all states are welcome to apply. Email us at info@deathwithdignity.org. ☎

Tireless Advocacy in Maine

We are honored to work with tireless grassroots partners across the country. One of our strongest partnerships is with Maine advocate Valerie Lovelace, founder of the nonprofit It's My Death.

It's My Death

Val created It's My Death to honor her sister Dee. In the wake of Dee's death, Val promised to "teach others how to be with dying, how to speak and listen to one another the way we had learned to speak and listen, and how to go on even when afraid."

The nonprofit provides services and education to people "who wish to... explore the meaning of life through embracing the certainty of death."

Network of Supporters

Val and other dedicated advocates have spent years building a network of supporters in Maine. In 2015 advocates worked with State Senator Roger Katz, who introduced an assisted dying bill in the state legislature, and educated other legislators on the bill.

The bill passed the House, but failed by a single vote in the Senate. Disappointed but undeterred, Val and her fellow It's My Death advocates redoubled their efforts for the 2017 legislative session.

Working closely with the Death with Dignity National Center, Val focused on developing a strategy for advocating for a bill. In February

2017, Sen. Katz and Rep. Jennifer Parker introduced Death with Dignity legislation in the Senate and House, respectively.

Ups and Downs of Advocacy

Val's leadership in conjunction with supporters from around the state—"I could never have accomplished anything on my own," she insists—played a major role in the passage of the bill in the Maine Senate. Frustratingly, the House voted the bill down in May. True to form, she has thrown herself into the next round of organizing.

"We have all resolved that come hell or high water, we're going to get legislation passed," Val says.

State-National Partnership

Death with Dignity continues to partner with It's My Death to recruit and educate new supporters and build relationships with legislators interested in sponsoring an assisted dying bill.

"It means a lot to know that a national organization is fully supportive of what we're trying to accomplish," Val says.

Val will continue to advocate for Death with Dignity until all Mainers have access to all end-of-life options.

A Vision for Maine

"I want my state to acknowledge the incredible intimacy and the very personal nature of dying as the final event of living a self-actualized, individual human life," she says. ☞



Implementation of the Oregon Death with Dignity Act began in 1997. Join us at a celebration luncheon to commemorate

20 YEARS OF THE OREGON DEATH WITH DIGNITY ACT

Wednesday, November 8, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
First Unitarian Church of Portland, Eliot Center

1226 SW Salmon St., Portland, Oregon

Limited seating. Please RSVP at <http://bit.ly/OR20Anniversary>



Val Lovelace (front/center) with advocates from Oregon and Maine after the April 5, 2017 legislative hearing on LD 347; Hallowell, ME.



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THE Dignity Report

"People should have the option to die without pain and suffering. I believe in having control over how we end our lives."

—Joyce Axelrod, Californian, filmmaker, community volunteer, longtime Death with Dignity supporter



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