

THE



Dignity Report

A publication of the Death with Dignity National Center

FALL 2018

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A photograph of an elderly man wearing a brown hat and sunglasses, holding a sign that reads "MAINE DEATH WITH DIGNITY". The sign is white with blue and light blue horizontal stripes. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with other people and tents.

**MAINE
DEATH
WITH
DIGNITY**

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Cover photo: Len Freeman, the first Maine Death with Dignity volunteer to gather 1,000 signatures for the petition to put an aid-in-dying measure on the ballot

GIVE DIGNITY

Death with dignity laws provide peace of mind to qualified terminally ill residents in **California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Oregon, Vermont, Washington**, and soon also **Hawai'i**. Help us 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.

Please visit **DeathwithDignity.org/Support** to learn more and contribute.

THANK YOU!

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Surviving Election Season



Regardless of your political leanings, the stakes and the tension are high this election season.

It can feel overwhelming.

LOCAL ADVOCACY

In politically challenging times, I like to focus on what's important to me. Rather than feel stuck in the mire, I prefer to engage with local advocacy efforts.

Indeed, as the Executive Director of a national organization, I believe the political activities that matter the most are the ones in your own hometown.

The opportunities for engagement are immense: from asking the candidate vying for your vote what their stance is on death with dignity to volunteering to work at the polls to handing out flyers and gathering signatures.

Personally, I'm engaged in an Oregon ballot initiative that I find particularly compelling, and

I've quizzed political candidates who have knocked on my door about their opinions about death with dignity. Woe to the uninformed candidate who shows up at my door!

CAMPAIGNING ACROSS THE US

At Death with Dignity National Center, we are involved in campaigns across the country.

I have met many of you in your local communities doing the hard work to build momentum for policy change. From our coalition in New York to signature gathering in Maine to building a grassroots operation in Nevada, you are working in your community to make change happen.

I applaud you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peg Sandeen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peg Sandeen
Executive Director

The Power of Storytelling

By Deborah Ziegler, California

Board member and author Deborah Ziegler has been speaking on death with dignity advocacy across the United States as well as overseas. This is an abridged version of her presentation on storytelling.

*

How can you make a difference as an individual? As an author of a book about my journey in 2014 toward death with my

daughter, I encourage the use of personal story. I've relied on three types of narrative in my advocacy.

THREE KINDS OF STORIES

Heartbreaking stories shine a light on the problem. These are stories about people who died in a protracted, painful way, with no legal options. In 2017, Eva Thompson told Maine legislators why she wanted the legal right to a peaceful death but was



Deborah Ziegler speaking at the World Federation of Right to Die Societies Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, in September 2018

forced to die the hard way. These stories illuminate why a terminally-ill patient might want aid in dying.

Inspirational stories introduce a pioneer who doggedly pursued their right to die despite obstacles. Facing impending death from brain cancer, my daughter, Brittany Maynard, asked me to help her move from California to Oregon. She bravely spoke about her support for aid in dying—and changed the trajectory of the death with dignity movement.

Finally, in *uplifting stories* of “as-good-as-it-gets deaths,” lawmakers, doctors, and

the community support the terminally ill patient in their choices. Betsy Davis, dying from ALS in San Diego, used California’s End of Life Option Act to create a death that was both a work of art and a celebration.

WHY WE TELL STORIES

Pema Chödrön wrote, “Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us what we need to know.” The conversation about dying in peace won’t go away until we have learned what we need to know—and until legislation reflects the will of the people.

What story will you share? 📖

WILL DIGNITY BE YOUR LEGACY?

Death with Dignity works to ensure people with terminal illness can die on their own terms. Visionary estate donors enable our work to continue so everyone across the nation has this fundamental right.

Whether you’ve already included Death with Dignity in your estate plan or are wondering where to start, we’d love to help.

Contact Amy Harris, Leadership Giving Manager,
(971) 808-2851 or aharris@deathwithdignity.org.

Returning to NEVADA

Death with Dignity National Center is returning to Nevada in 2019.

After passing the bill in the State Senate and falling short of passage in the House in the 2017 session, State Senator David Parks (D-Las Vegas) will introduce the bill again in the 2019 legislative session.

Right now, we are building a coalition of advocates and organizations.

In 2019, we will work with the Senator, a lobbying team, and the coalition to propel the bill through the complex legislative process.

To keep up to date on our work in Nevada, visit DeathwithDignity.org/NV and sign up to receive updates.

3

Times a death with dignity law will have been considered in the Nevada State Legislature.

On the Ground in MAINE



We are collaborating with a group of dedicated volunteers to gather signatures to place a death with dignity law on the ballot. Circulating petitions at polling places, farmers markets, fairs, and among friends and family, volunteers are rallying support from Mainers.

By providing strategic and financial support to Maine Death with Dignity, a grassroots political action committee, we are working to make the Pine Tree State the eighth jurisdiction to give its residents the end-of-life choices they deserve.

Join the campaign at MaineDeathwithDignity.org/volunteer.

61,123

Signatures currently needed to place the Maine Death with Dignity Act on the ballot.



Sandy hiking Mt. Fitz Roy in Patagonia, Argentina, in 2009

The Point Is the Choice

Donor Spotlight: Sandy Cath

After six years as a clinical social worker and 25 years as an Asset Manager in commercial real estate, Sandy Cath is enjoying retirement.

While she and her husband are technically residents of Lake Tahoe, Nevada, they spend a lot

of time on the road, in search of mountains to climb, trails to hike, and rivers to kayak.

When we caught up with Sandy one morning in early September, she spoke to us from her trusty Airstream trailer in Bend, Oregon, while drinking coffee and

preparing to hit the trail.

“Death with dignity is dear to my heart,” she said. “I have lived through taking care of both of my parents at the end of their lives. I’ve seen how difficult it can be.”

Before moving to Nevada, Sandy lived in Indiana, where she helped support the passage of Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (POST).

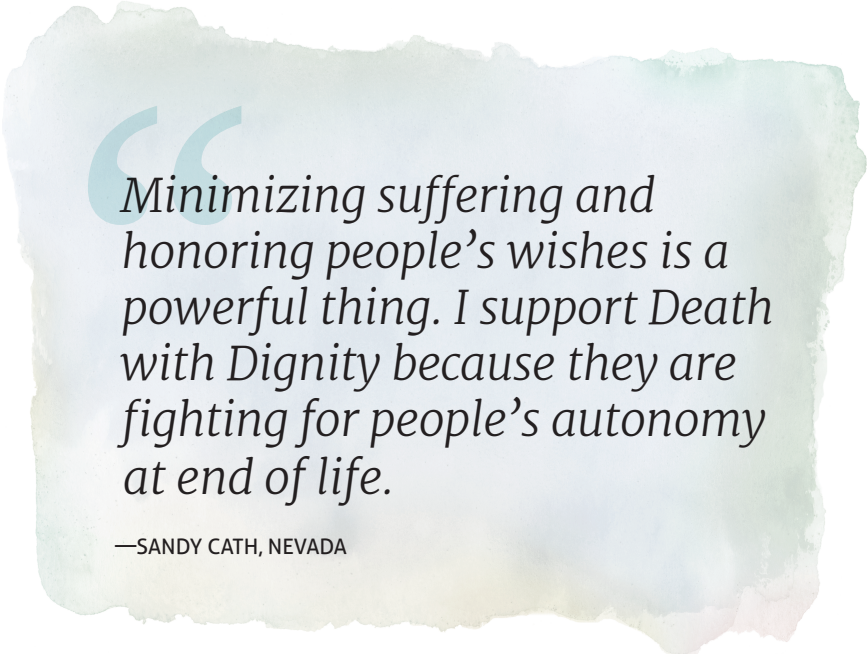
POST allows patients more nuanced options as they approach the end of their life and acts as an advance care planning tool to help ensure

individual patient treatment preferences are honored.

In addition to making generous financial contributions to Death with Dignity National Center, Sandy is also looking forward to volunteering with the Nevada end-of-life options campaign in 2019 (see page 6).

We are grateful to dedicated supporters like Sandy.

If you would like to learn more about supporting Death with Dignity financially or volunteering in your state, please send us a message at DeathwithDignity.org/Contact. 



“Minimizing suffering and honoring people’s wishes is a powerful thing. I support Death with Dignity because they are fighting for people’s autonomy at end of life.”

—SANDY CATH, NEVADA


Seeding Change Across the U.S.

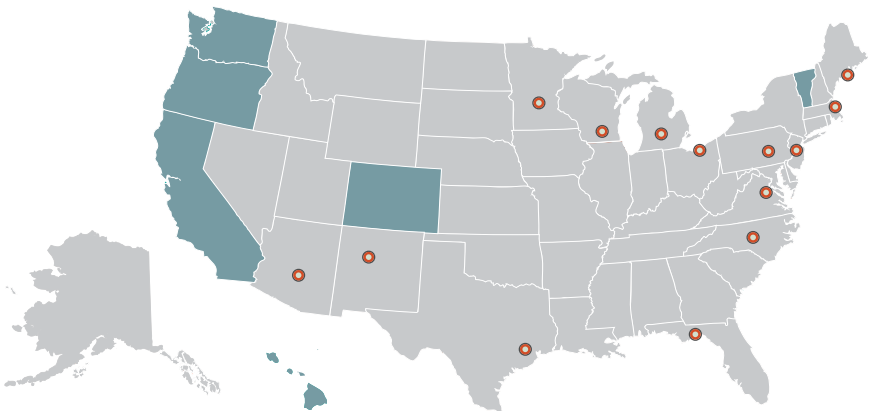
The Dignity50 State Leadership Incubator program nurtures grassroots, state-level advocacy efforts. We do this by providing technical assistance, strategic guidance, and financial support to advocates leading organizations to campaign for death with dignity legislation in their respective states. We also lend a hand to grassroots organizations to build websites, develop email communications, fundraise, lobby, and a lot more.

This fall, we are holding a series of trainings for advocates. Before the 2019 state legislative sessions commence we'll be distributing a batch of mini-grants to Dignity50 participants

to support their work. In the past, mini-grants helped grassroots groups create organizational branding, print educational materials, and improve websites.

In addition to the current program participants in Maine, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas, we are working to engage advocates in Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

We plan to expand the program to every state without a death with dignity law. If you'd like to get involved, contact us at DeathwithDignity.org/Dignity50. 



Accelerating My Living Plan

By Donna Wiegler, Maine

In April 2016, when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, with a five-year prognosis, I decided to accelerate my living plan. Being on my bike makes me feel alive, so I've been riding my Harley-Davidson motorcycle around Maine as much as possible.

But I know my days of riding are numbered.

I am using what time I have left to do the things I've always wanted to do—and to advocate for death with dignity. I am working with dedicated citizens in our state to make assisted dying an end-of-life option that can offer terminally ill patients dignity, autonomy, and control.

We have the power to pass a measure that ensures all Mainers have the right to die on their own terms. There has to be a

dignified way out for those who are dying and want to leave the pain and suffering behind.

This summer, when I wasn't soaking up the sun on an afternoon ride, I was at my local post office gathering signatures for Maine Death with Dignity.

There will be a time when I can't ride my Harley or go for a boat ride with my husband off the coast of Maine. When that time comes, I hope I have a choice about how my end goes.

What about you? 



Donna Wiegler: clinic manager, hospice volunteer, advocate, and Harley rider



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*“Fingers crossed, head down,
soldiering on.”*

—LEN FREEMAN, VOLUNTEER PETITION CIRCULATOR,
MAINE DEATH WITH DIGNITY, PORTLAND
(PICTURED ON THE COVER)

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