

THE



# Dignity Report

*A publication of the Death with Dignity National Center*

WINTER 2020



How We Make Change | State-By-State Update  
I Want Action Now | Supporting a Fundamental Right  
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*On the cover: George Eighmey (left) with former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, MD. The two worked together in the late 1990s to protect the Oregon Death with Dignity Act from efforts to repeal the law. See p. 11.*

## 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, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.** 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](https://DeathwithDignity.org/Support)** to learn more and contribute.

THANK YOU!

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# Our 2020 Vision for Success



January marks the start of the busy season at Death with Dignity. As state legislatures across the country reconvene, we are doubling down on our work with grassroots advocates and lawmakers—and 2020 is shaping up to be one of our most active years to date.

## **EMPOWERING GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS**

Thanks to your generous support, we're expanding our State Leadership Incubator program to provide more targeted support and training to grassroots advocates. The combination of local leadership, state-based political strategy, and our national expertise is the key to policy reform in all 50 states.

## **THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT**

If you'd like to learn more about where we're focusing our resources this legislative session, I invite you to join me online for a "State of the Movement" presentation address on February 6, 10 a.m. Pacific / 1 p.m. Eastern, in which

I will present an insider's view of the 2020 legislative landscape across the country. Learn more on page 10.

## **ON OUR SIDE**

From coast to coast, in poll after poll, support for death with dignity is strong and continues to grow. Young people like Sydney Derochie (p. 8), who lives in my home state of Iowa, represent a new generation of advocates who are the future of our movement. When I meet with legislators in states that have not yet passed an assisted dying law, I tell them what I know to be true: voters across the nation are on our side; and our issue—our movement—is here to stay.

Thank you for your contributions to our movement. Here's to our shared success in 2020 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peg Sandeen'.

*Peg Sandeen  
Executive Director*

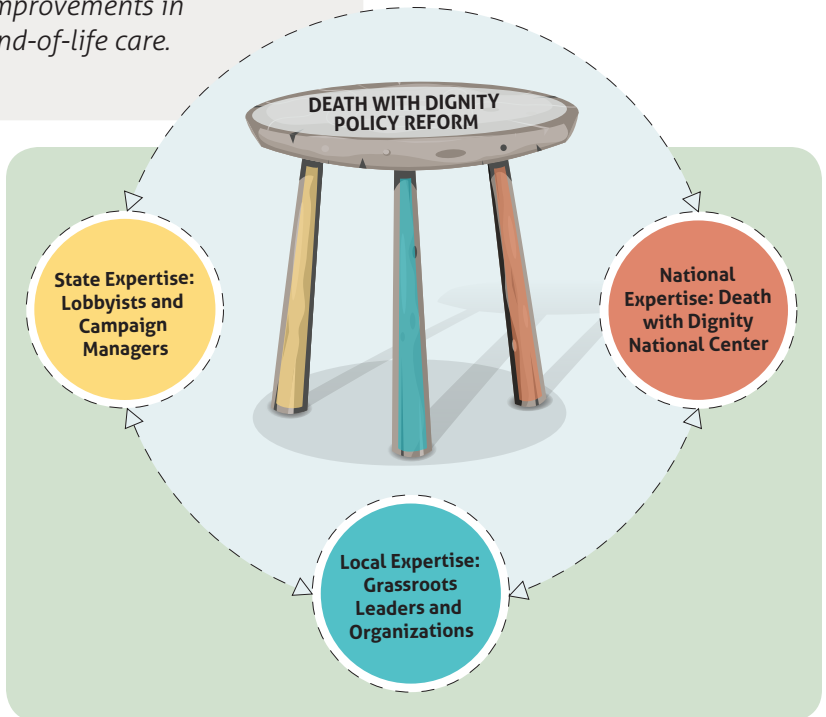
# Making Change:

## Our 50-State Strategy for Policy Reform

At Death with Dignity National Center, we have a time-tested model for changing laws. We have spent the past 25 years honing this model in service of accomplishing our mission:

*To promote death with dignity laws based on the model Oregon Death with Dignity Act, both to provide an option for dying individuals and to stimulate nationwide improvements in end-of-life care.*

We focus on three key areas: supporting grassroots organizations, partnering with state-based political experts, and contributing our national perspective and experience to the team. Local leaders share their on-the-ground knowledge and political connections; we share resources and lessons learned from leading successful campaigns in other states.







*From left: Death with Dignity State Leadership Incubator Manager Valerie Lovelace of Maine meets with New Hampshire State Representative Catt Sandler (D-Strafford County), and Bob McCown with New Hampshire Death with Dignity.*


Individuals and groups providing **State Government Expertise** may be legislators, lobbyists, campaign managers, law firms, and other local experts familiar with the state's political landscape and climate.

**Grassroots Leaders and Organizations** are the public face of the death with dignity movement on the state level. They organize community support and raise awareness online and at in-person events, and share lessons learned from training received through Death with Dignity National Center with their advocacy group. They may also meet with legislators to discuss and support efforts to move a bill.

**Death with Dignity National Center** drafts legislation, supports grassroots advocates,

and develops a customized strategic plan for each state to ensure passage of a law.

We support grassroots advocacy groups through our State Leadership Incubator. In 2020, we will continue to expand the program, strengthening our relationships with existing organizations and engaging advocates in a growing number of states while providing state- and national-level political expertise.

Additionally, we are hiring on-the-ground lobbyists in multiple jurisdictions to advance our policy-reform efforts this session. State-based partners know the ins and outs of their state legislature and keep us apprised of the latest legislative developments. 

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# Death with Dignity Across the Nation in 2020



## ARIZONA

We joined the Arizona End of Life Options Coalition in Phoenix last November to provide strategic support as they grow their organizational infrastructure. This year we are providing training and technical assistance through our State Leadership Incubator as they push for the introduction of a bill when the legislature reconvenes in 2021.



## MARYLAND

In 2020 we will be building on our many years of work in Maryland to achieve policy reform. We have retained a lobbyist and are collaborating with lawmakers, a local advocacy organization, and national organizations to draft a bill for the new legislative session. State Senator Cheryl Kagan is raising awareness and funds for Death with Dignity and other organizations through her annual "UnNaugural" music festival this month.



## MASSACHUSETTS

We spent considerable time in Massachusetts last year building bipartisan support among lawmakers for the End of Life Options Act. We also strengthened partnerships with advocates in the Bay State and continue our work to advance legislation.



## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Advocates with our newest grassroots partner organization, New Hampshire Death with Dignity, are hard at work building capacity and increasing awareness about assisted dying. We are working with a legislator to incorporate model language into a bill that will be introduced this session.




## NEW YORK

As part of the New York Alliance on Medical Aid in Dying, we continue to collaborate with local and national organizations to advance the bill under consideration by state lawmakers. We are partnering with a New York-based marketing team to share advocate stories in the media.



## VIRGINIA

The state's political leadership shifted in our favor following the November 2019 election, providing new opportunities for advancing death with dignity legislation. We are working with a new grassroots group to help them capitalize on this political moment by assisting them with state-based outreach.



## AROUND THE U.S.

Through our State Leadership Incubator, we are also supporting efforts in Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Kansas, where local advocates are increasing support for aid in dying at the grassroots level.

To learn more about your state and take action, visit  
**[DeathwithDignity.org/Take-Action](https://DeathwithDignity.org/Take-Action)**.

# I Want Action Now

By Sydney Derochie, Iowa

So many of my happy memories from childhood involve my dad making everything fun. He loved being around people and had many friends, and he could always make me laugh.

The fun ended in February 2018, when he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer. It was a huge shock to all of us.


As his illness progressed, he had to retire and eventually was no longer able to drive. He began in-home hospice care and was confined to a hospital bed around the clock. I sat beside him for hours, watching and listening to make sure he was still breathing.

During one especially difficult time, he said, "I want to be gone." I remember him laying there, crying, telling my mom he didn't want to do it anymore.

Ultimately, he died after months of suffering. Medical aid in dying could have made his death peaceful, but this option is not available in Iowa.

Initially, my mom was against death with dignity. But after watching my dad suffer in his final months, she changed her mind. My mom and I worked to bring our friends and family on board as supporters.

When I learned that legislators in my state had introduced an aid-in-dying bill, I knew I wanted to help it pass. Iowans deserve to have the end-of-life options that people in states with death with dignity laws do.

I am committed to this cause. I want action now. 



*Sydney Derochie with her father, Rob, in 2019.*

# Supporting a Fundamental Right

## Donor Spotlight: Steven Wasserman

“My parents felt passionately that the ability to make choices about how life ends is among the most fundamental of human rights,” Massachusetts resident Steven Wasserman told us.

### DISCUSSING DEATH AND DYING

For as long as Steven can remember, his family discussed the subjects of death and dying openly. His mother was an early member of the Hemlock Society, one of the first organizations to publicly endorse assisted dying. When Steven was in his teens, his father expressed to him his strong preferences about the way he wanted his life to end.

### “ON HIS OWN TERMS”

In 2016, Steven’s father was diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer, shortly after his home state of California passed the End of Life Option Act.


“He had no interest in observing the last few weeks of his own decline,” Steven said, “and his vision of how he wanted [his death] to happen never wavered.” He qualified for

and used the California law to die “on his own terms: openly, legally, and with the full support of his family.”

### ADVOCACY AND GRATITUDE

Following the death of his father in 2017, Steven made his first donation to Death with Dignity National Center and continues to advocate for our movement.

“I am grateful to the voters of California and the organizations who helped pass this law for providing such profound comfort to my dad during his most difficult days,” Steven said.

We are grateful to Steven for his steadfast support. 



Steven Wasserman (right) with his father and brother.

## *Join us for a special online event:*

STATE OF THE MOVEMENT ADDRESS:  
DEATH WITH DIGNITY IN 2020

DATE: **February 6th**  
TIME: **10 a.m. Pacific / 1 p.m. Eastern**

Death with Dignity Executive Director Peg Sandeen will share an inside look at the legislative landscape in 2020 and provide updates on our work in Massachusetts, New York, and nationwide.

Learn more and register at  
<https://www.deathwithdignity.org/state-of-the-movement/>

## **In Memoriam: Stephen Dunn**

On October 16, 2019, our dear friend and former Board Treasurer Stephen Dunn died of lung cancer. He died peacefully at home with loved ones by his side. He was 79 years old.

"Stephen was an ideal board member: very engaged, a financial expert, generous donor, and bright mind," Death with Dignity Board President George Eighmey said. "However, what made Stephen even more special was his ability to show concern for others, inject humor to get his ideas across, and make us all feel that our ideas were worthy of consideration."

"There was never a time when I didn't feel supported by Stephen," added Death with Dignity Executive Director Peg Sandeen. "He was very dedicated to our cause. His business acumen was an asset to our organization, and he always kept us accountable."



*Stephen Dunn.*

We will miss Stephen dearly.



# Scenes from a Celebration



On November 8, 2019, Death with Dignity National Center hosted an event in Portland to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Oregon Death with Dignity Act.

Two of Oregon's most prominent proponents and defenders of the Oregon law spoke at the event. U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) defended the law from congressional attempts to undermine it in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, MD, threatened to veto any legislation to repeal the law during his first term as governor and has continued to speak in support of death with dignity as an end-of-life option.

We also hosted many other movement leaders and steadfast supporters from Oregon, Washington, California, and Maine. Here, we share scenes from a historic celebration.



*From left: Death with Dignity Board member and Brittany Maynard's mother, Deborah Ziegler, and California advocate Elaine Fong. Elaine's mother used Washington's Death with Dignity Act to die peacefully following months of suffering from terminal cancer.*



*Event attendees listen to remarks by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.)*



*From left: Death with Dignity Board President George Eighmey, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), with Death with Dignity's Executive Director, Peg Sandeen.*



*Death with Dignity Board member Eli Stutsman, JD, right, and national political strategist Geoff Sugerman. Stutsman was the lead author of the Oregon Death with Dignity Act; Sugerman managed the successful 1994 campaign to pass the Oregon law.*



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# THE Dignity Report

*I am committed to this  
cause. I want action now.*

— SYDNEY DEROCHE, IOWA

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