

# EUTHANASIA: RIGHT TO LIFE — LIFESPAN POLICY STATEMENT



Right to Life - LIFESPAN opposes all attempts to legalize or condone euthanasia (mercy killing), including assisted suicide, which is the intentional use of medical technology to cause death or speed up the dying process by withholding of ordinary, appropriate, reasonable and prudent medical care.

On the other hand, Right to Life - LIFESPAN supports the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic that holds that although one must use ordinary, appropriate means to maintain one's health, one is not bound to use extraordinary and heroic measures. Thus death may be allowed to come naturally to the terminally ill when such heroic means only prolong the dying process and contain no hope for a reasonable return of health. This philosophy requires no legislation since it has been supported, without legal obstacles, by centuries of ethical practice.

These two concepts are vague and misunderstood by the majority of people. In recent years the terms "death with dignity," "passive" and "active euthanasia," etc. have only bewildered the layman who struggles to do the right thing for his afflicted loved ones.

Recently various groups and individuals have taken advantage of confusion to promote "natural death" legislation ("right to die," "living will," and the expansion of the durable power of attorney) and such bills have been enacted into law in many

states. Although some individuals, promoting such legislation, are sincere in their desires to help the terminally ill, others, such as the Hemlock Society and Choice in Dying, Inc. (previously known as the Society for the Right to Die, previously known as the Euthanasia Society of America) have as their goal the speedy passage of the "right to die" bills in as many states as possible, which may then easily be amended and expanded until they truly become active euthanasia laws. Even a cursory look at the literature published by these groups reveals that this is really their goal.

Right to Life - LIFESPAN believes that we owe our sick and dying something greater than unnecessary "right to die" bills, which would be first steps toward legalized euthanasia. There is a greater and clearer need to help the sick and dying to secure good health care. Right to Life - LIFESPAN also applauds advances in medical research which have produced effective pain killers which render the suffering more comfortable.

Right to Life - LIFESPAN alerts all citizens to the dangers of such "natural death" legislation and invites all concerned persons, including the news media, and other educational facilities to join in the compelling need to clearly distinguish between "the allowance of natural death to the terminally ill" and mercy killing.