

# MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED POLICY STATEMENT

*Adopted June 17, 1987; Amended March 31, 2014*

## Protest Negative Treatment

The members of Right to Life - LIFESPAN have been shocked and saddened by the ruling of the Indiana Supreme Court permitting denial of food and medical care to a newborn baby with a physical defect in the so-called "Infant Doe" Case (April, 1982), Bloomington, Indiana. This opens the way to denying rights to people on the basis of handicap or defect and the possible denial of rights to whole races or economic groups that prejudiced judges may consider "naturally defective."

We point out that the 1973 Rehabilitation Act forbids any discrimination against the handicapped by persons or organizations, including hospitals, and health care facilities benefiting from Federal Financial Assistance.

We urge the President of the United States to fully enforce all protection in this Act, and we urge all Michigan Legislators to use their influence to support such enforcement. We are aware that the non-treatment and even starvation of babies born with physical and/or mental challenges is occurring with increasing frequency in medical institutions and we urge Congressional and Senate hearings to investigate such alleged discrimination to see if the law has been enforced in the past and to determine if new legislation is needed. We also urge our state legislators to study conditions in Michigan to see if legal protection and enforcement are adequate in this state. We declare our support for organizations working for the rights of those with physical and/or mental challenges.

We support measures to make a ward of the Court any minor with physical and/or mental challenges who appears to be singled

out—by parents, hospitals, and/or any other relevant authority—for determined, life-threatening neglect. We call upon fair-minded citizens of all races, politics, creeds, to protest the inhumane "Infant Doe" ruling of the Indiana Supreme Court. We believe that a nation which has conquered killer diseases (ex: diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio) and sends men into space will also conquer the killer mentality that sees death as a proper answer to the problems of life.

## Positive treatment

On the national scene, there is one bright and encouraging sign of reawakening respect for Life. This is embodied in widespread efforts to bring those with physical and/or mental challenges into the mainstream of society.

The Special Olympics have given those with physical and mental challenges a chance to compete, to excel, to win...and take a praiseworthy step toward making these people accepted and understood. We strongly second the moves made by interested groups to upgrade the care of the elderly in nursing homes, and send forth a special plea to not let the whirlwind pace of our lives keep us from paying these elderly the attention and affection they deserve.

These efforts give us reason to hope that we shall all move with one heart to embrace our brothers and sisters with physical and/or mental challenges, for these concerns will be the sturdy paving for the road back to a reawakening Respect for Life.

