

# Coalition Against Assisted Suicide

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## For Immediate Release

### Coalition Against Assisted Suicide Denounces Initiative Filing

**Olympia, Wash---** (January 8, 2008) A coalition of people with disabilities, doctors, nurses, hospice workers, minority persons, and religious groups today announced they would oppose the assisted suicide initiative expected to be filed Wednesday with Washington's Secretary of State.

"Twenty-five states have already rejected various forms of assisted suicide, including the Oregon model," said Duane French, spokesman for the nonpartisan group Coalition Against Assisted Suicide. "The judgment of people with a terminal illness is often clouded by depression. Assisting people at their most vulnerable point to end their lives is not compassion, it's negligence."

"Doctors should be working to alleviate pain and treat depression, not helping people commit suicide," said Dr. Linda Seaman, a specialist in end-of-life care. "We cannot let fear guide public policy."

The Washington State Medical Association (the state affiliate of the AMA), the Washington Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Washington State Hospital Association do not support assisted suicide.

"Financial pressures motivate too many important health care decisions," French continued. "Sick and disabled people will feel pressured to choose assisted suicide. The people behind this initiative, the former Hemlock Society, want you to believe that 'safeguards' will prevent the terminally ill and disabled from abuse of the practice. The leading champion of assisted suicide, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, taught us that keeping assisted suicide illegal is the only true 'safeguard' against abuse."

The initiative would allow doctors to prescribe lethal doses of barbiturates to terminally ill patients, though what is terminal illness is not always clear.

"Predicting when someone will die has been shown to be very inaccurate and difficult," Dr. Seaman added. "If legalization allows people to hasten their own deaths, there's greater risk they act on that intent without proper intervention by trained medical teams. Many could die prematurely and unnecessarily."

"Not Dead Yet," a coalition member, is the state affiliate of a national organization that has helped defeat similar assisted suicide proposals in other states, either before legislatures or on the ballot, according to French, a quadriplegic, who is a founding member.

French said the coalition he represents, while not possessing the millions of dollars the proponents have, will educate the voters. "We want people to know the truth about assisted suicide, not the misinformation coming out of Oregon. Oregon's safeguards are a sham, and its oversight woefully negligent."

"Assisted suicide is an issue of whether we as a society are willing to put traditionally oppressed groups at risk of pressure to commit assisted suicide based on long-held prejudices. In our broken health care system, saving money will win out over the genuine needs of the sickest patients.

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