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Don't impose agonizing 'life sentence' on terminally ill, Libertarians tell Court

Strike down laws against doctor-assisted suicide

WASHINGTON, DC — Many pain-wracked, terminally ill patients are hoping the Supreme Court will rescue them from something even worse than a death sentence — a *life* sentence, the Libertarian Party said today.

“The court should grant these suffering Americans a reprieve by striking down laws against doctor-assisted suicide,” party Chairman Steve Dasbach said. “The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness includes the right to die with dignity.”

The justices heard arguments Wednesday on whether terminally ill people have the right to enlist the help of a physician to end their lives.

“Is there a right to die?” Dasbach asked. “Of course there is. Like the right to life, it is a basic human right that predates the Constitution and is protected by it. It can be neither granted nor taken away by politicians and judges.”

Nevertheless, one judge in particular is trying to abrogate that right, Dasbach said: Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. In several speeches last year, Scalia proclaimed that he found no legal “right to die” in the Constitution — and isn’t about to create one.

“Perhaps Mr. Scalia ought to read the Bill of Rights — especially the Ninth Amendment,” Dasbach said. “That amendment states: ‘The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.’”

“This means that the Constitution does not have to specifically grant a right to die; that right is *already* retained by the people. Mr. Scalia does not have to rummage around in the Constitution for an excuse to defend that right.”

Dasbach acknowledged that many Americans have practical, as well as philosophical, objections to doctor-assisted suicide. For example, many people voice concern over whether the nation will be pushed down a slippery slope toward euthanasia.

But Dasbach rejected that argument. “The power to decide how and when to die should reside *solely* with the individual patient, not with doctors, family members — and especially not with the government. The difference between a patient ending one’s own life and a doctor, family member, or politician doing it for them is the difference between dignified suicide and criminal murder. That’s a very firm distinction, not a slippery slope.”

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