

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1313

From an early age we are taught to locate EXIT signs – in schools, in public buildings, in airplanes. Do we expect an emergency? No, but isn't it nice to know where to go, just in case...

We also stress "back-up" plans, like having generators, spare tires, a shovel in the car in winter – "just in case." We **do** like to feel prepared, don't we?

That's how I view this bill – an EXIT choice, just in case.

I'm a registered nurse and I've worked with dying patients and their families for over 45 years. I know the thoughts that blindsides them in the wee small hours. They lie awake wondering, "What's it **really** going to be like?"

These days it's a lot harder getting **out** of this world than getting **into** it! Those with terminal illness aren't thinking about **being** dead; they anguish over the path ahead that leads to **getting** dead. How much will I suffer? Can I endure it? Will they hover around me, wondering if **that** gasp will be my final one?

I wish for a legal choice that would allow me to end my life without getting my caregivers in trouble. I'd like a "back-up plan, an EXIT strategy, "just in case." Would I choose to use it? I don't know, but I'm sure that having the medication on hand would certainly ease my fears.

Maybe it's like that for patients in states where they do allow Death With Dignity; where one can obtain the necessary medication legally. Indeed, it's been found that only a small percentage of those who **can** choose to use it, actually **do**.

Perhaps having the choice explains, in part, why there's been an increase in the use of hospice care in those states. "I guess I might consider hospice. If things get too awful, I can leave hospice and still have this other option."

A liberating thought! Possibly it helps those folks to tough it out -- one day at a time, perhaps one hour at a time.

Today I'm recalling the dying men and women who once stood in front of this very committee, begging, in vain, for legislators to hear their pleas. Most who testified knew it was already too late for them. But they came anyway, as a support for future dying patients.

I hope I never have to show up here again to plead the cause. But you can count on me to be back if it doesn't work this time. That's a promise!

Thank you.

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