

Death is non-partisan: Help pass the End of Life Options Act

“MY BELOVED HUSBAND, Bob James, died in 2022 of tongue cancer,” the Rev. Mary James of Durham told the House Judiciary Committee in February. “Bob simultaneously bled to death — not gently — and drowned in his own blood. As a minister, I do not believe that either his disease or the manner of his death were ‘God’s will’ for him. Let’s change that, so that a dying, suffering person may say instead to their doctor: ‘I’d like to pursue medical aid in dying. I’ve fought hard. I am ready to go in peace.’”

Rev. James’s heartbreaking testimony mirrored dozens of testimonies we listened to during a hearing last month in support of our bipartisan medical-aid-in-dying bill, the End of Life Options Act (HB 1283). The legislation would allow mentally capable, terminally ill adults to have the liberty to request a doctor’s prescription for medication they could take to peacefully end their unbearable suffering, in their sleep, at home, surrounded by loved ones.

These kinds of raw testimonies spurred the House Judiciary Committee last week to recommend in a bipartisan 13-7 vote that the full House pass this urgently needed legislation.

It is unusual for the two of us, from opposing political parties — as well as our Republican and Democratic committee colleagues who joined us — to agree on public policy.

But death is the ultimate non-partisan issue. It doesn’t care what your political views are. Sooner or later, we all die. If you

have helplessly watched a loved one die in agony, you are very likely to want the option of medical aid in dying to avoid it. Seven out of 10 Granite Staters (71%) support medical-aid-in-dying legislation, and majorities across the regional, religious, and political spectrums, including 63% of Governor Chris Sununu’s supporters, according to an October 2023 survey by the nonpartisan UNH Survey Center. Only one out of six residents (17%) oppose the bill.

Better end-of-life experiences start with better access for all New Hampshire people to quality, affordable health care, including hospice and palliative care, both of which are underutilized in our state. But we learned in testimony that there are cases, such as Rev. James’s husband, when the best pain management strategies don’t work, when patients’ experience of suffering cannot be alleviated. Hospice and palliative care nurses and physicians testified that for these patients, the option of medical aid in dying offers hope, comfort, and peace of mind. Just

knowing they have the option can make an enormous difference for patients. We heard this over and over from loved ones of patients and from mental health and medical professionals.

The End of Life Options Act is conservative, modeled after time-tested laws since 1997 in numerous other states that are proven to prevent coercion. It offers terminally ill patients the freedom to make informed decisions based on their own values about how they want to experience the last days of their lives.

This bill is entirely consistent with existing New Hampshire law, which says that our state “recognizes that individual persons have the right, founded in the autonomy and sanctity of a person, to control decisions relating to the rendering of their own medical care” (RSA 137-J:1).

The act is compassionate and it protects the vulnerable. The option of medical aid in dying offers solace to suffering patients and their loved ones and helps foster honest conversations about end-of-life care.

To qualify for medical aid in dying

under the act, a patient must confer with two health care providers with expertise in end-of-life care. Both these providers must advise the patient about all other treatment and care alternatives, including hospice and palliative care. They both must assess that the patient is able to fully understand and make decisions about their death and that they are not being unduly influenced by others. The providers must also affirm that the patient has a terminal condition, is expected to live no more than six months and that they can take the aid-in-dying medications themselves.

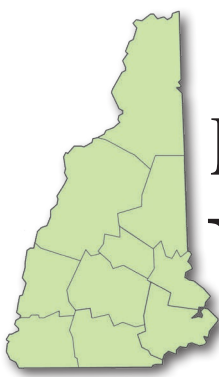
We also know there is no substantiated correlation between medical aid in dying and suicide. Suicide is a public health and medical concern that requires collective efforts to address. The conflation — intentional or accidental — of medical aid in dying with suicide traumatizes the loved ones of people with an unresolved mental health crisis who actually died by suicide. It also offends terminally ill individuals, who desperately want to live but are destined to die no matter what, and just want to die peacefully.

We respect that some of our colleagues will never want the option of medical aid in dying. We ask only that they respect the vast majority of our constituents who want this option, by passing this legislation for terminally ill Granite Staters who may not be with us next year. Otherwise, they may die with needless suffering like Bob James did.

Rep. Robert J. Lynn, R-Windham, represents Rockingham District 17. He chairs the House Judiciary Committee and previously served as chief justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Rep. Marjorie Smith, D-Durham, represents Strafford District 10. She is the prime sponsor of the N.H. End of Life Options Act and serves on the House Judiciary Committee.



Reps. Marjorie Smith & Robert J. Lynn



NEW HAMPSHIRE VOICES

Letters

Court is right to overturn decision barring Trump

To the Editor: In full disclosure, I am not remotely connected to either the Donald Trump or the Joe Biden campaign. I don’t personally know anyone who is. I’ve never been to a Trump rally, nor have I ever seen an episode of “The Apprentice.” I do not watch any major cable news program to be told how to think.

When the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on ballot access for Trump in Colorado was announced, I did what all free-thinking people should do. I actually read the actual ruling. Even though it was Trump’s lawyers who petitioned the court, this ruling was not about Trump or whether he “engaged in insurrection” or

not. But many media outlets just had to remind us once again that “the SCOTUS ruling does not exonerate Trump of the insurrection charge,” leaving out the minor detail that Trump has never actually been charged with insurrection!

According to page three of the ruling, it was about this one question: “Did the Colorado Supreme Court err in ordering President Trump excluded from the 2024 presidential primary ballot?” The justices (all nine of them) then concluded that they did and thus, reversed the absurd 4-3 decision of the Colorado Supreme Court.

Nine-to-zero “per curiam” (not authored by any particular justice) rulings, although commonplace 100 years ago, are very rare

today. I also actually listened “live” to the oral arguments a few weeks ago. I salute the Supreme Court on their timely reversal ruling.

LEN CANNON
New Boston

Ignoring the Trump peril

To the Editor: Shame on the New Hampshire Union Leader for virtually ignoring the fact that Donald Trump is dictating U.S. foreign policy, killing a bipartisan bill to stop the border invasion, supporting a Russian dictator brutalizing Ukrainians, and denying humanitarian aid for starving Palestinians. Since when does a convicted criminal and election denier dictate American foreign policy?

MALCOLM ODELL
Exeter



Granite State women are ready to fight for President Biden

WOMEN DON’T NEED anyone to remind us of what’s at stake in 2024. We know that our fundamental freedoms, our families, our security, and our very democracy are under attack — Donald Trump and his MAGA allies remind us of that every day.

This November, as Granite Staters, we face as clear a choice as ever.

Over the past four years, President Joe Biden has created jobs for hard-working Americans, including recently investing \$44 million in Manchester via an Economic Development Administration grant for biomanufacturing — estimated to create thousands of jobs in our backyard while bolstering the Granite State as a national leader in cutting-edge science and innovation.

Booming industries are a catalyst to attract talent to work and raise a family here and they provide opportunities for our kids to stay in the Granite State while growing their families and careers.

On the other hand, Trump’s economic record is abysmal. His two signature economic initiatives



Maura C. Sullivan

— his 2017 corporate tax policies and trade wars — hurt Granite State families, costing the United States nearly a quarter million jobs. Furthermore, economic growth during the Trump administration was the slowest in modern history — a record number of Americans filed for unemployment and the U.S. economy shrank by 3.5% in 2020 — the worst economic performance since 1946.

The Biden administration has lowered day-to-day costs for Granite Staters, including for prescription drugs and groceries, and the President signed an executive order with the goal of lowering the cost of child-care for working families.

Meanwhile, Trump wants to raise health care costs and rip away basic health coverage from tens of millions of Americans, which would hurt vulnerable citizens across our state,

including those in rural communities who struggle to access affordable quality health care.

And perhaps one of the clearest contrasts between President Biden and Donald Trump is on reproductive health care. While President Biden is fighting for the rights for women and families to make their own reproductive decisions — including the decision to start and grow a family via IVF — Trump brags about overturning Roe v. Wade, has called for punishing women who make their own reproductive choices, and wants to eliminate reproductive freedoms for citizens across our nation. Meanwhile, President Biden has pledged to veto any national abortion ban that comes to his desk.

President Biden is committed to making our schools and communities safer, recently announcing executive actions to promote safe firearm storage — not entirely dissimilar to the weapons safety rules we followed in the Marines, which kept us safe.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that nearly 90% of Americans support

background checks, Trump refuses to support commonsense gun legislation that would keep firearms out of the hands of citizens who pose a potential risk to our children and community, while still respecting the rights of responsible gun owners.

By rebuilding relationships with key allies, aiding Ukraine, and rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement, President Biden’s leadership on the world stage has provided stability to our global community — which ultimately keeps our families and children safer here.

Trump, on the other hand, recklessly provoked North Korea and encouraged Russian aggression against our NATO allies — jeopardizing the world order and ultimately risking the safety and security of every Granite Stater at home.

Finally, President Biden is a leader we can trust to uphold our American values. He has demonstrated that he believes in the rule of law, in our institutions, in the right of every citizen to vote, and in the very fabric of our democracy itself. The same can not be

said of Donald Trump who has aligned himself with foreign dictators, incited an attempted coup d’etat at our nation’s Capitol, mocked our country’s fallen war heroes, and invoked Hitler at his rallies — all the while facing 91 felony counts, having been indicted four times, and found liable by a jury of his peers for defaming a woman he was found to have sexual assaulted.

As a Granite Stater, the choice is clear — and it was on full display during President Biden’s State of the Union address last week as he detailed the work he’ll continue to do to support New Hampshire families, including providing access to quality, affordable childcare.

Who is the leader that

will ensure freedom and security for our families and our community? And more simply, as a parent, who is the leader I want my children to look to as an example?

I am a Marine Corps Iraq War veteran. I’m a Granite Stater. I’m a mom. And I’m a proud member of our New Hampshire Women for Biden-Harris coalition. For all these reasons, I’m going to fight for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris because the stakes are too high for any of us to sit on the sidelines. I hope you will join us.

Maura C. Sullivan is the second vice chair of the New Hampshire Democratic Party, a Marine Corps Iraq War veteran, and was U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs assistant secretary under President Barack Obama. She lives in New Castle.

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“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty” — II Corinthians 3:17

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By Bruce Tinsley

