

Measure 51 would repeal doctor-assisted suicide

Doctors are divided over whether or not patients are capable of making the decision to die

By Eric Collins
Community Editor

The issue is your personal right to die.

Although this right may not be tested for some years, and although terminal diseases and old age seem far off in the future, the outcome of the Measure 51 vote could forever change the doctor-patient relationship.

It's not surprising that doctors are leading debates on both sides.

Dr. Richard Barnhart, president of the Lane County Medical Society, said he believed the issue comes down to personal freedom.

"What I see as the crux of the issue is do people have a right to make this decision, and ... if so, is that individual right a greater good than the dangers it might pose to the rest of society," he said.

The language in Measure 51, however, is simply about repealing the narrowly approved physi-

cian-assisted suicide initiative that was passed by Oregon voters in 1994. Measure 16 allowed doctors to prescribe lethal doses of pills to terminally ill patients who have less than six months to live. The law included safeguards, such as a 15-day waiting period, two oral requests and one written, and a second physician's opinion in addition to counseling for patients with impaired judgment from depression.

The law never went into effect, though, due to challenges in the courts by two doctors and a terminally ill woman.

By 1997, members of the state Legislature decided to send the question back to the voters after a controversial study disputed the "success" in killing patients with orally ingested medication.

Dr. Pieter Admiraal, a leading researcher on physician-assisted suicide in the Netherlands, was quoted as saying 25 percent of the attempted suicides by oral ingestion in the study were unsuccessful.

Proponents of Measure 51 say this "failure" could include side

effects such as vomiting and convulsions — symptoms of an undignified death and the opposite of what the measure intended.

However, opponents, along with Admiraal, claim, that his study was misread. In a letter from Admiraal included in a "No on 51" packet, he writes that "every patient will die" with a dose as suggested in Measure 16. However, a lingering death can occur where "the patient is in a deep coma without awareness and so without any suffering."

While many people may become confused over the contradicting opinions coming from the medical profession, Barnhart, who is neutral on the subject, said he believes physicians on both sides share a common value — putting the patient first.

"It's just that they don't agree on which side of this argument really does put the patient first," he said.

Dr. Glenn Gordon, a local surgeon and television spokesperson for the "No on 51" campaign, said he believes a terminally ill patient is best served by having options available.

"I want to control my death," Gordon said. "I want to control the time that I'm here. I want to do it in a dignified and as comfortable a manner as possible. I believe people should have that option."

Measure 51 advocates say the safeguards in the measure do not go far enough. Measure 16 requires two oral and one written request. At least 15 days must pass from the time of the first request. During the written request, two witnesses must be present attesting that the patient is acting voluntarily. Then 48 hours must pass before the prescription is written. A Measure 51 packet claims senior citizens may feel pressured to die or that depressed people may be quick to make a decision under stressful circumstances.

However, Dr. Peter Goodwin, chairman of Oregon Right to Die, said he believes it is absurd to think a patient would be forced into anything with the safeguards in place.

"...I am asking for aid in dying. I am asking voluntarily. I am not being coerced. I have been asked to consult with my family and this is

how I've decided," Goodwin said.

Despite the safeguards, many doctors claim doctor-assisted suicide is a conflict of interest. Dr. William Toffler, president of Physicians for Compassionate Care, which is a "Yes on 51" proponent, agreed.

"If people want [the right to kill themselves], I readily believe that society should decide that, but it should never be doctors," he said. "There should be a different group of individuals. It cannot be physicians. It's an inherent conflict of interest, I believe."

He said patients make themselves too vulnerable to doctors for them to be able to make the decision.

"[Patients] really expose themselves to us emotionally, physically, even spiritually," Toffler said. "That's a trust that can't be violated."

Toffler said the claim that people need doctors to help them commit suicide is false.

"I would say, and I'm not recommending this, but if you want to kill yourself it's readily available," Toffler said.

Measure 52 proposes use of lottery bonds to fund schools

If the measure passes, \$150 million would be distributed to state public school districts

By Michael Burnham
Community Reporter

In the upcoming Nov. 4 special election, voters will be asked to approve a one-time \$150 million shot in the arm for Oregon's public schools.

The money would come in the form of Ballot Measure 52. If the

measure passes, the sale of lottery-backed revenue bonds would be authorized for public school funding.

The revenue from the sale of the lottery bonds would be distributed to the state's school districts based on student enrollment numbers.

Measure 52 was referred to voters by the 1997 Oregon Legislature in July as part of a \$4.35 billion 1997-99 state funding package for K-12 schools. The measure would provide a means

to solve existing budget hurdles and to make physical improvements to school districts during the next two years.

According to the Oregon Department of Education, Eugene School District 4J would receive about \$5 million out of the total revenue generated during the two-year period. This additional funding would roughly break down to \$245 per student.

To concur with local bond restrictions in Measure 50, the school district would add about

\$2 million per year in funding. The disbursement of the additional funds would begin during the 1998-99 fiscal year.

Eugene School Board Chairman Chris Pryor, who is a proponent of Measure 52, said the school district broke even for its budget this year; however, it is expecting budget shortfalls in the next few years if the measure is not passed.

"This is a one-time deal and a one-time expense to be used for one-time purchases," he said.

Richard Burke, an opponent of Measure 52 who is affiliated with the Mainstream Liberty Caucus, argued that schools already have adequate funding.

He said the current budget represents the largest school budget in the state's history, and Measure 52's funding is not targeted to specific enough education projects.

Burke urges voters to find out how their additional funding will be spent before they vote on the measure.



Cyberdyne
SYSTEMS

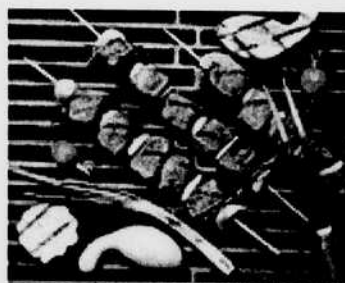
One of Eugene's oldest and most reliable Internet Service Providers

Best Prices in the Area!
unlimited use • no setup fees
high speed (56 Kbps): \$25/month
individual (33.6 Kbps): \$16/month
e-mail only: \$5/month

• Proud to be the area's first local ISP to offer high speed, 56 Kbs/X2* modem connections
• Download from the Internet at nearly twice the speed of 28.8 modems!

CALL TODAY FOR DETAILS (541) 465-4743
28 East 11th Street, Eugene, OR 97401
e-mail: sales@cyberdyne.com
web: http://www.cyberdyne.com/
Open Mon.-Fri 10:30am-5:00pm & Sat. 11:30am-5:00pm

Internet Access
\$16**/month

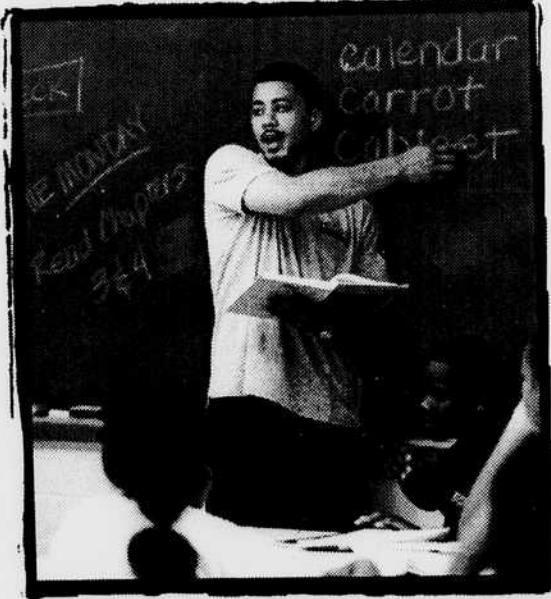


RECORDS CD'S TAPES
BUY trade SELL
USED and NEW
open SEVEN days

House Of Records
258 e 13th Eugene

We have a lot of music
music is good for you

Even the Odds.



Theirs and Yours.

Join **AmeriCorps**, the domestic Peace Corps. By tutoring kids, restoring streams and parks, building playgrounds, helping communities hit by disasters, serving in a health clinic, or meeting other important needs, you'll help others succeed.

When you join **AmeriCorps** for one year, you get:

- ★ A living allowance and health care
- ★ Skills for your future
- ★ Deferment of qualified student loans
- ★ Almost \$5,000 for education
- ★ An experience you'll never forget

Sound interesting? Call **AmeriCorps** for more information:
1-800-942-2677 (TDD 1-800-833-3722).
Or visit our website at <http://www.cns.gov>



AmeriCorps. Getting Things Done.