



ASSISTED SUICIDE: FATALLY FLAWED

2024 Year in Review

Aging with dignity is your right and our mission. Yet, this right increasingly is threatened by organizations who act like wolves in sheep's clothing, disguising harmful practices as "compassionate" to sway public opinion. We have seen this most prominently with the physician-assisted suicide (PAS) movement. Our team has compiled a summary of the biggest wins and setbacks for end-of-life care in 2024, and we discuss how Aging with Dignity (AWD) is fighting to ensure everyone is given the chance to age with dignity.

Wins

1. PAS maintained its momentum last year, with legislators in 20 states introducing or reintroducing pro-PAS legislation. PAS legislation failed in 19 of the 20 states¹, with Governor John Carney of Delaware showing great courage by becoming only the second governor ever to veto such legislation.² Encouragingly, West Virginia became the first state to prohibit the practice of physician-assisted suicide via a ballot initiative.³
2. Alexander Raikin of the Ethics and Public Policy Center released two groundbreaking reports titled *From Exceptional to Routine: The Rise of Euthanasia in Canada*⁴, and *A Pattern of Noncompliance*⁵, which expose the crimes and horrors in Canada's practice of what it euphemistically calls "Medical Assistance in Dying" (MAiD).
3. Eat Breathe Thrive, a nonprofit organization that works to prevent and help people recover from eating disorders, published a report that shows how the PAS movement targets those suffering from eating disorders. At least 60 such people have died from it so far, although the real number is likely far higher.⁶
4. British actress and disability rights activist, Liz Carr, wrote, presented, and starred in a film titled *Better Off Dead?* in which she convincingly demonstrates how legalizing physician-assisted suicide creates a massive risk for people with disabilities⁷. Liz traveled to Washington, D.C., where she held a screening of the film, which AWD attended.

Setbacks

1. Despite these wins, the threat of PAS is greater than ever before. Based on data painstakingly compiled by Aging with Dignity through public sources, in 2024 our world crossed the threshold of 200,000 recorded deaths to PAS/euthanasia globally, since 1998⁸.
2. Colorado passed a bill amending its current physician-assisted suicide law to allow nurse practitioners to evaluate patients for PAS eligibility and prescribe them lethal drugs. It also changed the waiting period from 15 to 7 days with the option to waive the waiting period entirely if physicians allege that the patient won't live more than 48 hours. With the addition of this amendment, patients can be pressured into a literal life or death decision with no deliberation time.

3. In Europe, under the supervision of radical euthanasia advocates Philip Nitschke and Florian Willet, a woman from Missouri became the first casualty of the “Sarco pod” (short for sarcophagus), a single-person gas chamber⁹. The woman had a compromised immune system and traveled to Switzerland, where the Sarco pod suffocated her with nitrogen. Accounts of the woman’s death show that it was neither humane nor dignified – the nitrogen caused such severe seizing and cramping that the autopsy revealed strangulation marks on her neck. Nitschke and Willet made it clear that they want more deaths using the Sarco.¹⁰
4. In the UK, the House of Commons voted in favor of PAS legislation despite concerns that the UK will become a mirror image of Canada, who only a few weeks after the vote released their fifth annual MAiD report which revealed that MAiD took the lives of over 15,000 people in 2023 making it the 5th leading cause of death.
5. Finally, two juggernauts in the movement for disability rights and better end-of-life care, Diane Coleman and Rita Marker, passed away. These two women played crucial roles in the fight for better care and the fight against PAS. They will be missed, and their memory remains through the foundation they built upon which our modern fight stands.

AWD in Action

AWD continues to stand for patients’ rights as the nation’s leader in advance care planning. Last year we passed the 43 million mark for the number of *Five Wishes* (FW) documents distributed across America. We take great pride in knowing that we have been able to help so many families navigate difficult situations with dignity. Another great milestone for our organization was the introduction of our *Finishing Life Faithfully* (FLF) document, which is the companion guide to FW for Catholics on end-of-life care. FLF and FW have already received endorsements from many, including Cardinals Sean O’Malley

and Timothy Dolan, Archbishops Gregory Aymond and Thomas Wenski, and Bishops William Wack, James Wall, and Michael Burbidge and is used by Catholics across the country.

AWD also spent the entire year building and planning the launch of Assisted Suicide Watch (ASW), a project aimed at educating and providing helpful resources to those trying to better understand the threat of PAS in America, and elevating the roles of palliative and hospice care. With ASW and a beautiful, engaging new website, we will reach a broader audience and expand our ability to defend patients’ rights and dignity.

Notes

1. AZ, DE, FL, IL, IN, IA, KY, MD, MA, MN, MO, NH, NY, NC, PA, RI, TN, VA, WI
 2. Gov. John Carney. “Governor Carney Vetoes House Bill 140.” *State of Delaware News*, 20 Sept. 2024, <https://news.delaware.gov/2024/09/20/governor-carney-vetoes-house-bill-140>
 3. House Joint Resolution 28, West Virginia State Legislature, https://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Status/bills_text.cfm?billdoc=hjr28+sub+enr.htm&yr=2024&sesstype=RS&billtype=JR&houseorig=H&i=28
 4. Raikin, Alexander. From Exceptional to Routine, *Cardus*, 7 Aug. 2024, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/health/reports/from-exceptional-to-routine>
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5. Raikin, Alexander. A Pattern of Noncompliance, *The New Atlantis*, 11 Nov. 2024, <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/compliance-problems-maid-canada-leaked-documents>
6. Roff, Chelsea, and Catherine Cook-Cottone. "The Dangers of Assisted Suicide to People with Eating Disorders," *Eat Breathe Thrive*, 31 July 2024, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58e4b708f5e2312cc949b8b4/t/66e828dde88bf757b8f0acc3/1726490860329/Assisted+Suicide+in+Eating+Disorders+Report+-+US+Version.pdf>
7. Carr, Liz. "Better Off Dead?" BBC One, BBC, 22 May 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001z8wc>
8. Switzerland became the first country to officially record PAS/Euthanasia deaths, beginning in 1998. Other countries have since followed.
9. Nerozzi, Timothy H.J. "Suicide Advocates Boast over Apparent Use of Sarco Suicide Capsule on US Citizen in Switzerland." Fox News, FOX News Network, 24 Sept. 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/suicide-advocates-boast-over-apparent-use-sarco-suicide-capsule-us-citizen-switzerland>
10. Eastham, Janet. "'I'll Bring Death Pods to Britain If Assisted Dying Law Passes.'" *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 24 Nov. 2024, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/11/24/sarco-death-pod-philip-nitschke-assisted-dying-bill>