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PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE SUPPORTED IN ARIZONA

A majority of Arizonans support a bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide, according to findings from a recent *Grand Canyon State Poll*. The legislation, modeled after the Oregon physician-assisted suicide law, was recently introduced into the Arizona state legislature. This law makes it legal for doctors to help terminally ill patients end their lives by giving them a prescription for fatal drugs. To be eligible, patients have to be diagnosed as having a terminal disease and not more than six months left to live. They need to get a second opinion from another doctor, and ask for the drugs three times. Finally, there is a 15-day waiting period before the prescription is filled.

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. Calling took place between March 6 and March 11, 2003. Four hundred randomly-selected Arizonans participated in the survey and results are accurate within a +/- 5 percent margin of error, at a 95 percent confidence level.

ASSISTED SUICIDE SHOULD BE LEGAL

A majority of Arizonans (57%) believe doctors should be allowed to assist patients living with incurable disease and in severe pain to end their lives. One-third of Arizonans (32%) do not believe doctors should be allowed to assist patients in this way. Forty-seven percent of Arizonans believe they would personally consider assisted suicide if they were terminally ill and living in severe pain. Forty-one percent of respondents say they would not consider this option.

Respondents were read a description of the physician-assisted suicide legislation introduced recently into the Arizona state legislature and asked if they support or oppose this legislation. The legislation would make it legal for doctors to help terminally ill patients end their lives by giving them a prescription for fatal drugs. To be eligible, patients would have to be diagnosed as having a terminal disease and not more than six months left to live. They would need to get a second opinion from another doctor, and ask for the drugs three times. Finally, there would be a 15-day waiting period before the prescription could be filled.

When asked if they support or oppose this proposed legislation, a solid majority of respondents (57%) say they support passage of this physician-assisted suicide law in Arizona. Thirty-three percent of respondents oppose passage of the legislation. Another five percent say they are not sure about supporting the legislation at this time. Their support depends on how the final legislation is ultimately worded. Five percent of Arizonans say they don't know where they stand on this issue.

Men and women approach this issue slightly differently. Sixty percent of men support the proposed physician assisted suicide legislation, compared with 55 percent of women. Larger differences in levels of support are evident among political partisans and different income earners. Two-thirds of Democrats and Independents in Arizona support the legislation, while Republicans are divided on the issue. Forty-six percent of Republicans support the physician-assisted suicide bill and 46 percent oppose it. People earning higher incomes in the state are more supportive of the legislation than people earning lower incomes. Two-thirds (66%) of the highest income earners (more than \$75,000/year) support physician-assisted suicide in Arizona compared with 48 percent of the lowest income earners (less than \$25,000/year). Interestingly, the state is not divided on this issue by age.

Fred Solop, director of the *Grand Canyon State Poll*, commented, "Arizonans support the Oregon model for physician-assisted suicide. While people may not personally choose assisted suicide for themselves, they are not willing to deny this option available to others. The state has compassion for terminally ill and suffering people, and is willing to experiment with new legislative ideas."



Social Research Laboratory, Northern Arizona University

March 14, 2003

**GRAND CANYON STATE POLL
BACKGROUND MEMO**

Spring 2003

The *Grand Canyon State Poll* was conducted between March 6 and March 11, 2003. A random sample of 400 adult residents of Arizona was asked questions regarding physician-assisted suicide. Survey question results are subject to a sampling error of +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

When a person has a disease that cannot be cured and is living in severe pain, do you think doctors should be allowed by law to assist the patient to commit suicide if the patient requests it, or not?

	Percent	Count
Should be allowed	57%	228
Should NOT be allowed	32%	129
Depends on circumstances	6%	23
Don't know/refused	5%	20
Total	100%	N = 400

Hypothetically, if you were seriously ill with a terminal disease and living in severe pain, would you consider assisted suicide, or not?

	Percent	Count
Would consider	47%	188
Would NOT consider	41%	162
Depends on circumstances	8%	33
Don't know/refused	4%	16
Total	100%	N = 399

Several Arizona legislators have proposed a law that would make it legal for doctors to help terminally ill patients end their lives by giving them a prescription for fatal drugs. To be eligible, patients would have to be diagnosed as having a terminal disease and not more than 6 months left to live. They would need to get a second opinion from another doctor, and ask for the drugs three times. Finally, there would be a 15-day waiting period before the prescription could be filled. Do you support or oppose this proposed law?

	Percent	Count
Support	57%	229
Oppose	33%	133
Depends	2%	6
Support only with changes	3%	11
Don't know/refused	5%	21
Total	100%	N = 400

	Support	Oppose	Depends/Support With Changes	Don't Know	N
Total	57%	33%	5%	5%	(400)
Female	55%	36%	5%	5%	(200)
Male	60%	31%	4%	6%	(200)
Republican	46%	46%	1%	6%	(138)
Democrat	66%	28%	2%	4%	(82)
Independent	65%	23%	8%	4%	(124)
\$0 - \$25 K	48%	39%	4%	10%	(52)
\$25 K - \$50 K	53%	37%	5%	5%	(122)
\$50 K - \$75 K	57%	37%	1%	5%	(82)
Over \$75 K	66%	23%	7%	4%	(99)
Ages 18 – 39	55%	32%	4%	10%	(84)
Ages 40 – 59	60%	29%	6%	5%	(166)
Ages 60 +	57%	39%	2%	2%	(141)