Medical aid in dying: A hallmark of patient-centered care: Augusta Free Press

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### Medical aid in dying: A hallmark of patientcentered care

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### By Barbara Coombs Lee and Kim Callinan

One thing the national election did not change: as the nation's **75 million baby boomers** retire, an ever growing number grapple with the reality that people die in circumstances they would not choose. At a time when the country is divided, the election showed one issue unites us: personal choice in end-of-life care.

The most recent proof? By a nearly 30-point margin, Colorado voters approved a citizen-led End-of-Life Options ballot initiative on Nov. 8. The new law gives terminally ill adults the option to get a doctor's prescription for medication they may decide to take to end unbearable suffering, by dying peacefully in their sleep. Voters across a broad demographic range supported Prop. 106, according to exit polling conducted for The Associated Press and television networks in Colorado.



This Colorado victory stands in a line of advances for the end-of-life choice movement over the past two years.

1) California enacted a medical aid-in-dying law that took effect in June; 2) the District of Columbia

Council passed medical aid-in-dying legislation and the mayor signed it Dec. 19: and 3) lawmakers in 1

Council passed medical aid-in-dying legislation and the mayor signed it Dec. 19; and 3) lawmakers in 19 states introduced medical aid-in-dying bills this year.

The question before us is why is the issue of medical aid in dying gaining so much momentum? And how can we leverage this momentum to improve general end-of-life care?

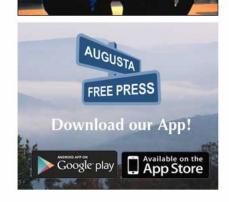
During the past 20 years, our country has made little or no progress on key quality indicators: **non-beneficial** treatment is still on the rise; advanced directives are still ignored; and admissions to intensive care units (ICUs) in the last 30 days of life continue to rise. People want to die at home, but two-thirds die in institutions.

Respected policy makers publicly acknowledge that we won't change these key quality indicators until a populist movement rises to drive a transformation. Obviously, the consumer movement already exists. But to harness the power of this movement, the palliative care community and medical establishment must embrace patients' desire for self-determination, including shortening an intolerable dying process.

The American public has embraced medical aid in dying because it puts patients firmly in charge of their own decisions about end-of-life care. To patients, it is a prime litmus test of person-centered care. It exemplifies a medical system that respects patients by allowing them to assert their values and priorities as death approaches.

However, Medical Aid in Dying is only a start. To truly transform end-of-life care in this country, we need to stop the conveyor belt of over treatment and false promises. We need to ensure that healthcare providers give people complete information about all their end-of-life care options. It is the <a href="https://en.life.com/only/way">only/way</a> to ensure patients make fully-informed treatment decisions.





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Today, we call upon leaders within the medical, policy and palliative care communities to recognize the growing consumer movement. We call on them to unite around a new definition of 'patient-centered care.' A definition that respects patients' values and priorities around death as paramount...even if they differ from those of the healthcare community. Only by working together will we finally make noticeable, significant improvements on key quality indicators of end of life care. Then people will finally be able to die the way most of us want: peacefully, at home, and in the arms of our loved ones.

Barbara Coombs Lee was an ER and ICU nurse and physician assistant for 25 years. Currently, she is an attorney and President of Compassion & Choices, the nation's largest end-of-life choice advocacy organization, with 450,000 supporters nationwide. Kim Callinan is chief program officer for Compassion & Choices. She holds a Master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University, a graduate certificate in public health from the University of South Florida and a Bachelor's degree in government from Oberlin College. This oped was originally published in The Hill's Congress Blog.



















## Discussion

## Top Stories

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## Recent News

- Red Cross issues emergency call for blood, platelet donations
- Virginians can begin ordering tree seedlings Jan. 10
- One more element needed to make children's educational apps most effective
- Girl Scout cookie sale turns 100 this year
- Public hearing Jan. 10 for Route 250 bridge replacement in Albemarle
- Congolese poet, activist to speak at Bridgewater College MLK observance
- Community Emergency Response Team winter/spring training begins next week
- Culpeper District transportation meeting set for Wednesday
- Street Knowledge with Chris Graham: What is the optimal UVA starting 5?
- Survivors of Suicide Loss Peer-to-Peer Support Group launching in Staunton on Jan. 9
- Extra attention helps cut flowers stay vibrant longer
- Sleep Tight Farm named 2017 Virginia AITC book of the year
- Lynchburg District Traffic Alert: Week of Jan. 2-6
- Route 29 Solutions Traffic Alerts for Dec. 26-Jan. 6
- Culpeper District Traffic Alerts: Dec. 26-Jan. 6

## Recent Sports

- Men's basketball: Liberty drops first conference game to UNC Asheville
- Women's basketball: Liberty shoots past CSU in Big South opener
- ➤ Women's basketball: Randolph-Macon downs Bridgewater
- Game Notes: #11 UVA plays at Pitt on Wednesday
- Norfolk State starts conference play at Morgan State on Wednesday
- George Mason wraps up homestand Wednesday vs. UMass
- FSU's Dwayne Bacon named ACC Basketball Player of the Week
- Daniel Dixon buzzer-beater lifts William & Mary to CAA win









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Join us for the 2017 season!

1/07: Snow White and the Prince Workshop (Grades 5-12)

1/13: Chris Mann - A Night with the Phante

1/21-22: Xanadu The Musical Auditions

1/22: Paragon Ragtime Orchestra

1/24: Lyndhurst CCC and POW Camp lectu 1/27: LIVE @ the WAYNE with Wan

WayneTheatre.org

- ➤ Women's basketball: UVA falls 54-49 at No. 21 Syracuse
- Three UVA wrestlers place at Southern Scuffle
- Momen's basketball: EMU gets to the line early, often in win over Frostburg State
- Video: Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski to have back surgery, miss four weeks
- Street Knowledge with Chris Graham: What is the optimal UVA starting 5?
- Fishburne alum Daniel Dixon named CAA basketball player of the week
- Three UVA wrestlers advance to semifinals at Southern Scuffle

## **Recent Politics**

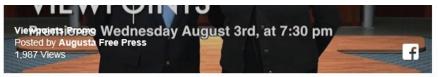
- Goodlatte effort to gut ethics watchdog backfires on GOP
- Medical aid in dying: A hallmark of patient-centered care
- McAuliffe proposes significant criminal justice reforms for 2017 GA session
- Del. Steve Landes announces town hall meetings
- Culpeper District transportation meeting set for Wednesday
- What will President Barack Obama's environmental legacy look like?
- Virginia Organizing holding healthcare rally in Harrisonburg on Tuesday
- New USDA initiative expands conservation tools for farmers
- Virginia farmers to help shape national Farm Bureau policies
- ACLU, CAIR use Khizr Khan to claim Iraq War was for Bill of Rights
- Robert Hurt: Best wishes for the New Year
- Critics: Atlantic Coast Pipeline DEIS hides the truth
- ₾ Groups blast FERC review of Atlantic Coast Pipeline
- Sen. Warner on Obama administration response to Russia interference
- ► Ken Plum: What do I do now?

## **Recent Business**

- Top seven car stories for 2016
- à Virginia companies exhibiting at Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco
- Staunton Downtown Development Association to share consumer survey data
- ► Hearing aids: Making sure they fit
- ≥2017 and 'Killer Apps' for the transition
- ≥ Test shopping reveals flameless, tea candles that pose extreme danger for children
- Six steps to start a WordPress blog
- Budget cuts could have dramatic impact on state's largest industry
- Dominion comments on FERC statement on Atlantic Coast Pipeline
- SBA Hurricane Matthew Business Recovery Center in Virginia closing
- Five remote career categories to watch in 2017
- ► Hurt & Proffitt acquires Anderson & Associates
- ≥ Survey of Virginia cattle farms coming in January
- ≥ Is your hearing aid doing what it's supposed to do?
- ≥ USDA to measure financial well-being of farm families

## Viewpoints





Hosts Chris Graham and Crystal Graham of Augusta Free Press highlight local news and newsmakers with an emphasis on the Shenandoah Valley on **Viewpoints** on WVPT.

#### Join the conversation on WVPT's Facebook page.

Chris Graham is the editor of Augusta Free Press, ESPN3 baseball broadcaster and the author of five books. Crystal Graham is the award-winning former host of WVPT's Virginia Tonight.



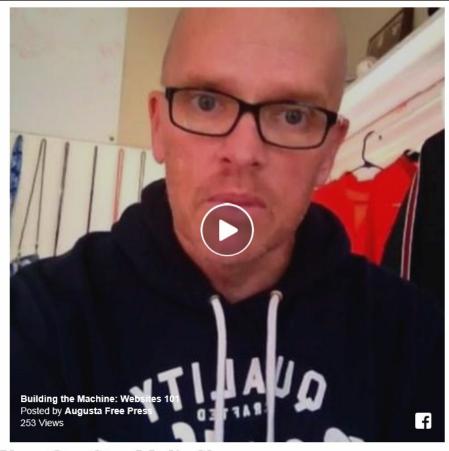
Show airs Wednesday nights at 7:30 p.m.

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