

Lawmaker: 'Quit Figuring Out Reasons to Justify Killing People'

As state legislators across America grapple with proposed laws on euthanasia, South Dakota State Rep. Steve Hickey (R-Sioux Falls)—facing a potentially terminal illness himself—has no qualms sharing exactly where he stands on the issue.

Yesterday, Rep. Hickey sent a letter in reply to a constituent's question on "death with dignity" and felt strongly enough to tweet it to his followers.

In the letter, Rep. Hickey shares from his experiences as a police chaplain and minister as well as how he may have "only 3-5 years" to live after being diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, considered terminal unless he receives a lung transplant. "The world of death and dying is a world that I spend quite a bit of time in," he comments.

"Death is strictly the domain of God," he writes with conviction. "We need to quit figuring out reasons to justify killing people: abortion, death penalty, euthanasia."

This year alone, 24 states and Washington, DC are actively considering new laws to provide "death with dignity"—legalizing the practice of a person taking deadly drugs to end their life prematurely, also known as euthanasia. South Dakota has yet to introduce such a bill.

The full text of his original letter is reprinted below:

Thank you for your letter inquiring about my interest in supporting Right to Die legislation. Initially I want to extend my concern and prayers for you with regard to your declining health. Reading your letter reminded me of my Uncle

Thomas, who shot himself rather than let his terminal illness drag on.

Believe me, I understand the rationale, especially considering the hope we can have of eternity with God through our faith in his Son, Jesus. Perhaps you are a person who shares my Christian faith and also appreciate that sentiment. Countless times I've seen Jesus take the sting out of death for the believer.

Enclosed is an article which you perhaps have seen which tells some of the story of my own health situation. My mother died, and so did her brother and sister, from what I have been diagnosed with: pulmonary fibrosis. Doctors say there is no cure and the average patient lives only 3-5 years after diagnosis without a transplant.

I lost another half liter of lung capacity since last fall. My uncle died before a lung transplant was available to him. My aunt lived two years after her transplant and my mom lived six years after her transplant. It's a hard way to go. I'm only 48.

Also, you may know that I'm a minister and have been at the death bed of countless people over the years. As a Sioux Falls police chaplain I've also been at the scene of a number of suicides. The reason I share all the background with you is so that you can see the world of death and dying is a world that I spend quite a bit of time in.

Out of all these experiences including my own situation, and my religious background, I have come to the conclusion that death is strictly the domain of God and we need to quit figuring out reasons to justify killing people: abortion, death penalty, euthanasia. The Bible teaches God gives us sufficient grace to live and I have found this includes sufficient grace to die.

I've written a few books and in one of them I write about how

we have a “fraidy cat” view of death – seeing it as the worst thing that could happen, as a travesty, final and the end. God sees it very differently. To him death leads to life. Confidence and strength in facing death comes from good theology. Please forgive the little sermonette there, but these are things I deal with daily and have found to be true.

From my position in the legislature I can’t in good conscience be a part of a “death with dignity” bill. Hopefully my comments above are sufficient to explain my reasoning. Please feel free to respond as frank as you’d like. Again, know that my thoughts and prayers are with you.

Sincerely,

Rev/Rep Steve Hickey (District 9, Sioux Falls)

Several state legislatures, including Colorado, Connecticut, and Maryland, have now voted down “death with dignity” bills in their state—rejecting extensive lobbying by out-of-state groups funded by the Soros America Foundations. Many state legislature sessions continue through the end of June.

“Please join with me in praying for Rev. Steve Hickey’s healing, believing for his prolonged voice for righteousness in America,” says Bound4LIFE Executive Director Matt Lockett.

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