

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Member,

I am writing today in opposition of House Bill 643 and Senate Bill 701, both of which are titled, An Act concerning the End of Life Options Act. Good Morning. My name is Tom Steffens. I am a former Navy Seal and a retired Rear Admiral.

My purpose today is to highlight the negative impact legalizing assisted suicide will have on our Veterans.

As you know, suicide among active duty and veterans is off the scale.

The national average for civilians is 16 suicides per 100,000.

For Veterans it is 30 per 100,000.

And the suicide rate for women veterans is TWICE that of their civilian counterparts.

Every veteran group that I have talked to about assisted suicide has had the same reaction. WHAT ARE WE DOING? What did we fight for?

So, I leave you with THREE TAKEAWAYS.

First, our state veterans programs and our civilian veterans organizations ( like the Navy SEAL Foundation or AMVETS ) fight every day to bring vets back into community and prove to them their lives matter – something millions of vets with PTSD and TBI struggle with everyday .

If we legalize assisted suicide it sends a CLEAR and OFFICIAL SOCIETAL MESSAGE that all lives are NOT important. That can't stand.

Secondly it says: **SUICIDE is OK!** But of course we know that every soldier suicide comes with nothing but pain and agony for the family, his friends, her platoon mates and for the society as a whole. It's not compassionate, it's horrible.

Finally, as proof of these impacts, in Oregon where assisted suicide has been legal for 20 years, the veteran suicide rate is 25 % higher than the national average. Those are real lives, real families, and real defenders of our way of life.

I know you see the far reaching and unintended impacts of legalization and ask you to turn your time, power and authority to provide even better treatment and care for all our citizens. Not to kill them.

Thank you for your time and God bless you for YOUR SERVICE. I share your oath.  
I know what you're doing is NOT easy.