

# VICTORY IN VACCO

On June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Vacco v. Quill* upheld the laws in New York and Washington state that make it illegal for doctors to assist in the suicide of their patients. The decision said that “the New York statutes outlawing assisted suicide neither infringe fundamental rights nor involve suspect classifications.” The court added that “The distinction between letting a patient die and making that patient die is important, logical, rational, and well established.”

Just as important, the high court reaffirmed the reasoning of the New York law when it emphasized the necessity of “maintaining [the] physicians’ role as their patients’ healers; it also said that the New York law protected “vulnerable people from indifference, prejudice, and psychological and financial pressure to end their lives.”

The league’s response was as follows:

“The Supreme Court acted with great jurisprudential wisdom in upholding laws that prohibit doctor-assisted death. It fully recognizes the clear line that exists between allowing a patient to die and forcing a patient to die. It also affirms the status of physician as life-saver, not as life-taker. Regrettably, the high court does not apply this logic to abortion, for if it did, it could not argue that doctors who help to kill unborn babies are somehow flexing their constitutional muscles.

“Those who were most opposed to doctor-assisted death, namely the undereducated, the elderly, minorities, the handicapped and the poor, are the biggest beneficiaries of this decision. The only losers are those who interpret liberty as including the right of doctors to kill their patients and those who see the most vulnerable segments of our society as little more

than human rubbish."