

WHO WILL LIVE AND DIE IN CALIFORNIA?

Recently, lawmakers in California passed the End of Life Option Act with votes of 42-33 in the state Assembly and 23-14 in the senate. When we went to press, the outcome was still awaiting Gov. Jerry Brown's decision.

No one in public life would ever say it is morally licit to entice the burdensome—the mentally ill, the disabled, uninsured immigrants, and the like—to kill themselves, yet that is what many lawmakers in California voted to do. They can scream all they want about how pure their motives are, but the fact of the matter is that the impending assisted-suicide bill delivers exactly that outcome.

The bill is modeled after Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, a law that has made suicide so respectable that Oregonians now kill themselves at a rate 41 percent higher than the national average. This figure does not count the 859 people who elected to kill themselves with a lethal injection, kindly provided to them by their doctor.

We know from evidence collected in Europe and the U.S. that the most vulnerable segments of society are overrepresented among the doctor-assisted dead; conversely, the affluent able-bodied are underrepresented. Why? Because the rich and powerful have access to the best health care, and are not presented with the kinds of "got-ya" type options that the dispossessed are afforded. This has been particularly true in a state like California where millions receive government-subsidized health care. Moreover, we know from many studies that suicide requests are more often made by those suffering from depression and related maladies.

Even the politics of this bill were obscene. Because it

previously stalled in committee when going through conventional channels, it was recently jammed through in a special session called to address Medicare financing. That is one reason why Gov. Brown opposed it. Catholic League members in California were urged to contact Governor Brown.