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House sends anti-assisted suicide ban to governor

By Dustin Hurst
March 28th, 2011

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Rep. Cliff Bayer, R-Boise, sponsored the bill in the Idaho House

The Idaho House has concurred with the Senate and voted to ban assisted suicide in Idaho.

The measure, Senate Bill 1070, passed the House 61-8. It now heads to Gov. Butch Otter's desk for consideration.

Idaho hasn't necessarily had a problem with assisted-suicide in recent history, but one of the sponsors of the bill, Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Meridian, said the measure will help ward off attempts to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Idaho.

In order to prosecute a physician or medical worker under the plan, it would need to be shown that there was intent to help a patient commit suicide. That means that if a patient illegally uses a doctor-prescribed medicine to overdose, thus committing suicide, the physician could not be held liable.

However, if a doctor prescribes a lethal dose of medicine and instructs a patient how to use it to commit suicide, that physician could be prosecuted under the bill if it is signed into law.

The penalty for assisting in a suicide would be a maximum of five years in prison.

Non-medical workers would also be eligible to be prosecuted if they assist in completion of a suicide.

Jason Herring, president of Right to Life of Idaho, told lawmakers in the committee hearing on the bill that humans shouldn't have the ability to hasten their own demise. "We don't believe this belongs to a doctor or a hospital," said Herring. "This belongs to our creator."

Rep. Grant Burgoyne, D-Boise, challenged that notion, saying that he has the right to make all end-of-life decisions. "My life is mine," said Burgoyne. "It's mine for me to decide how it should end." He also argued that suicide is a religious issue only. "It's not an issue in which government should take a side."

Idaho Chooses Life and the Idaho Medical Association also support the bill. The measure faced opposition in the Senate by a state and national entity called Compassion and Choices, a group that stumps in favor of allowing assisted suicide, but there was no testimony against the bill in the House committee.

Tags: [Butch Otter](#), [David Ripley](#), [Idaho Medical Association](#), [Jason Herring](#), [Right to Life Idaho](#), [Russ Fulcher](#)

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