

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Global Strategy Group
RE: Montana Statewide Survey
DATE: 04.05.13

Strong Support for End-of-Life Choices among Montana Voters

Montanans reject efforts to criminalize personal choices, Political cost to legislators who support penalties

Montanans strong support for end-of-life choices is driven by a fundamental belief that these choices are private, personal decisions that should be made by terminally ill people and their families without government interference (82% agree), according to a recent survey of 605 likely voters in Montana conducted by Global Strategy Group between April 3 and April 4, 2013. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.0%.

Key findings include:

- **There is strong – and broad – support for end-of-life choices:** Fully 69% of voters support allowing a mentally competent adult who is dying of a terminal disease and in extreme pain to choose to end his or her life in a humane and dignified way, including 48% who strongly support such a choice. Support cuts across demographic and partisan lines and can be seen among Democrats (83% support), Independents (66% support) and Republicans (59% support), men (68% support) and women (69% support), young (70% 18 to 44) and old (70% 65+).
- **Montanans reject the criminalization of doctors who comply with their patients' end-of-life choices:** Nearly three-quarters of voters (73%) oppose a proposal that would send doctors to jail for 10 years and fine them \$50,000 if they, at their patient's request, provide medication that would allow the patient to end his or her own life in a humane and dignified way. Here again we find consensus across party lines (81% oppose Democrats/74% Independents/64% Republicans).
- **There is a real cost to legislators who support any efforts to criminalize this process:** Montana voters will not tolerate a legislator's support for the proposal to send doctors to jail and fine them \$50,000 for complying with their patient's wishes. Fully 67% of voters say they would be less likely to vote for a legislator who supported such a proposal, including 53% who said they would be much less likely.
- **Voters believe strongly that the law should allow doctors to comply with their patients' end-of-life choices:** By a margin of more than 2 to 1 (69% agree/25% disagree), voters believe that the law should allow doctors to comply with the wishes of a dying patient in severe distress who wants to ease his suffering and chooses to end his or her own life.
- **Voters want to know they have a legal option to end their own life in a humane and dignified way:** More than 7 of 10 voters (71%) say that if they were terminally ill and in severe distress, they would want the legal option to end their own life in a humane and dignified way.

The bottom line is this: End-of-life choices are private and personal choices that terminally ill people make with their families – and Montanans believe it should remain that way. Broad majorities of Montanans strongly support legal end-of-life choices and strongly reject any efforts to criminalize doctors for complying with their patient's wishes. Furthermore, these data suggest that legislators will pay a real price for supporting efforts to penalize and criminalize doctors for doing so. Ultimately, Montanans support the choice for others, want to be able to make the legal choice for themselves, and believe there is no role for government when it comes to making that choice.