

Good afternoon Committee Chair and members. My name is Whitey Powers and I live in Durango. I am testifying in support of the *End of Life Options Act*.

My wife, Janis was diagnosed with an incurable lung disease in 2007 that caused her to endure many complications including perforated colon, broken vertebrae, brain damage, and numerous infections.

In 2010 Janis developed cancer, which resulted in many more complications. Between 2007 and 2011, I took her to the hospital 240 times. In the summer of 2011 she said she wanted to die and she went off her medications with the consent of her doctors. During her third week of hospice care my daughter and I were informed that she had a week to live. At that time, my wife pleaded with the hospice nurse to give her something to hasten her death. The nurse said, "I really want to help you but I can't, it's not legal." That was a heart wrenching scene. Her last wish on this earth to be free of pain and it was denied.

Earlier that evening my wife aspirated and each time she took a breath a loud crackling sound resonated from her lungs. Before the nurse left for the day she instructed my daughter and me to give her morphine periodically to control her pain and help keep her asleep and comfortable. The next morning I entered her room about 6:30am and her chart indicated that it was time to give her

morphine, which I did. I observed her for a while, she seemed to be agitated and was laboring with her breathing. Thinking she was struggling with pain, I gave her more morphine. I continued to observe her for another 10 or 15 minutes and she was grimacing and started to open her eyes. I gave her the rest of the morphine. It was 7am and she died a few minutes later.

I later learned that giving that amount of morphine in such a short period of time ^{probably} ~~may have~~ caused my wife's death. Even though she wanted to die and probably was close to it, I didn't want to be the person who caused her death. If the End of Life Options Act had been in effect, my wife and I could have avoided that final and difficult chapter of in her life.

In 2011, I purchased a revolver. I'm 77 years old and determined that if I become terminally ill I will do whatever I have to in order to avoid the unnecessary suffering that so many terminally ill people go through when dying. ✓ If I choose to end my suffering, on my own, with a revolver because there are no other options then I will. My seeking aid in dying as a medical treatment would absolutely be my preference.

No other person or government should deny a terminally ill person their individual freedom and basic right to direct their own dying process.

I would like to ask you to support the *End of Life Options Act*.