

Vermont becomes third US state to legalize assisted suicide

May 20 2013

Vermont became on Monday the third US state to legalize physician-assisted suicide.

Peter Shumlin, the Democratic Governor of the small progressive-leaning state, signed into law a bill that [lawmakers](#) adopted last week. Vermont follows the states of Oregon and Washington in legalizing the practice.

"Vermonters facing [terminal illness](#) at the end of their lives now have control over their own destinies," Shumlin said, at a ceremony at the Capitol in Montpelier.

Vermont, a mostly rural state in New England, is the first US state to adopt physician-assisted suicide by legislative process rather than through a voter-initiated referendum.

Under the Vermont law, terminally ill patients who are given no more than six months to live can ask their doctors to prescribe a [lethal dose](#) of drugs to hasten their death.

Several [safeguards](#) are built into the law. These include a requirement for two medical opinions, the option of a psychiatric examination and a 17-day waiting period before a life-ending prescription can be filled.

In 2009, Vermont became the first state to legalize same-sex marriages. It now has been approved in 12 US states.

But it also has one of the fastest-aging populations in the United States. By 2030, one in four Vermonters will be 65 years of age or older, according to University of Vermont economist Art Woolf.

A [Pew Research Center](#) poll found that 84 percent of Americans support allowing a terminally ill adult patient to decide if they want to be kept alive.

© 2013 AFP

Citation: Vermont becomes third US state to legalize assisted suicide (2013, May 20) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-05-vermont-state-legalize-suicide.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.