

Vermont becomes third US state to legalize assisted suicide

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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.

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