[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi-protected](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-protected) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Euthanasia](/wiki/Template:Euthanasia)[Template:Homicide](/wiki/Template:Homicide) **Euthanasia** (from [Template:Lang-el](/wiki/Template:Lang-el); "good death": εὖ, *eu*; "well" or "good" – θάνατος, *thanatos*; "death") is the practice of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve [pain](/wiki/Pain) and [suffering](/wiki/Suffering).[[1]](#cite_note-1) Professor [Robert Jay Lifton](/wiki/Robert_Jay_Lifton), author of *The Nazi Doctors* and a leading authority on the T4 program, contrasts this program with what he considers to be a genuine euthanasia. He explains that the Nazi version of "euthanasia" was based on the work of [Adolf Jost](/wiki/Adolf_Jost), who published *The Right to Death* (Das Recht auf den Tod) in 1895. Lifton writes: "Jost argued that control over the death of the individual must ultimately belong to the social organism, the state. This concept is in direct opposition to the Anglo-American concept of euthanasia, which emphasizes the *individual's* 'right to die' or 'right to death' or 'right to his or her own death,' as the ultimate human claim. In contrast, Jost was pointing to the state's right to kill. ... Ultimately the argument was biological: 'The rights to death [are] the key to the fitness of life.' The state must own death—must kill—in order to keep the social organism alive and healthy."[[47]](#cite_note-47) In modern terms, the use of "euthanasia" in the context of Action T4 is seen to be a [euphemism](/wiki/Wikt:euphemism) to disguise a program of [genocide](/wiki/Genocide), in which people were killed on the grounds of "disabilities, religious beliefs, and discordant individual values".[[48]](#cite_note-48) Compared to the discussions of euthanasia that emerged post-war, the Nazi program may have been worded in terms that appear similar to the modern use of "euthanasia", but there was no "mercy" and the patients were not necessarily terminally ill.[[48]](#cite_note-48) Despite these differences, historian and euthanasia opponent [Ian Dowbiggin](/wiki/Ian_Dowbiggin) writes that "the origins of Nazi euthanasia, like those of the American euthanasia movement, predate the Third Reich and were intertwined with the history of eugenics and [Social Darwinism](/wiki/Social_Darwinism), and with efforts to discredit traditional morality and ethics."[[40]](#cite_note-40)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

### The 1949 New York State Petition for Euthanasia and Catholic Opposition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

On January 6, 1949, the Euthanasia Society of America presented to the New York State Legislature a petition to legalize euthanasia, signed by 379 leading Protestant and Jewish ministers, the largest group of religious leaders ever to have taken this stance. A similar petition had been sent to the New York State Legislature in 1947, signed by approximately 1,000 New York physicians. Catholic religious leaders criticized the petition, saying that such a bill would "legalize a suicide-murder pact" and a "rationalization of the fifth commandment of God, 'Though Shalt Not Kill.'"[[49]](#cite_note-49) The Right Reverend Robert E. McCormick stated that [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote) The petition brought tensions between the American Euthanasia Society and the Catholic Church to a head that contributed to a climate of anti-Catholic sentiment generally regarding issues such as birth control, eugenics, and population control.[[40]](#cite_note-40) The petition did not lead to a law.

## Euthanasia debate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Historically, the euthanasia debate has tended to focus on a number of key concerns. According to euthanasia opponent [Ezekiel Emanuel](/wiki/Ezekiel_Emanuel), proponents of euthanasia have presented four main arguments: a) that people have a right to [self-determination](/wiki/Self-determination), and thus should be allowed to choose their own fate; b) assisting a subject to die might be a better choice than requiring that they continue to suffer; c) the distinction between passive euthanasia, which is often permitted, and active euthanasia, which is not substantive (or that the underlying principle–the [doctrine of double effect](/wiki/Doctrine_of_double_effect)–is unreasonable or unsound); and d) permitting euthanasia will not necessarily lead to unacceptable consequences. Pro-euthanasia activists often point to countries like the [Netherlands](/wiki/Netherlands) and [Belgium](/wiki/Belgium), and states like [Oregon](/wiki/Oregon), where euthanasia has been legalized, to argue that it is mostly unproblematic.

Similarly, Emanuel argues that there are four major arguments presented by opponents of euthanasia: a) not all deaths are painful; b) alternatives, such as cessation of active treatment, combined with the use of effective pain relief, are available; c) the distinction between active and passive euthanasia is morally significant; and d) legalising euthanasia will place society on a [slippery slope](/wiki/Euthanasia_and_the_slippery_slope),[[50]](#cite_note-50) which will lead to unacceptable consequences.[[36]](#cite_note-36)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In fact, in [Oregon](/wiki/Oregon), in 2013, pain wasn't one of the top five reasons people sought euthanasia. Top reasons were a loss of dignity, and a fear of burdening others.<ref name=usa151020><http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/10/20/california-physician-assisted-suicide-belgium-netherlands-editorials-debates/74296214></ref>

In the United States in 2013, 47% nationwide supported doctor-assisted suicide. This included 32% of [Latinos](/wiki/Latino), 29% of [African-Americans](/wiki/African-American), and almost nobody with disabilities.<ref name=usa151020/>

## Legal status[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Globalize](/wiki/Template:Globalize) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) West's *Encyclopedia of American Law* states that "a 'mercy killing' or euthanasia is generally considered to be a criminal homicide"[[51]](#cite_note-51) and is normally used as a synonym of homicide committed at a request made by the patient.[[52]](#cite_note-52) The judicial sense of the term "[homicide](/wiki/Homicide)" includes any intervention undertaken with the express intention of ending a life, even to relieve intractable suffering.[[52]](#cite_note-52)[[53]](#cite_note-53)[[54]](#cite_note-54)