

# SMITHJOHNSON

## R E S E A R C H

### Vermont DPD Baseline Survey SmithJohnson Research, Val Smith Ph.D.

#### Methods:

Field Dates:	• November 1-2, 2011
Sampling Method:	• Enhanced Voter File
Sample Size:	• 400 completed interviews Vermont
Sampling Error:	• Less than +/- 5.0%
Unit of Analysis:	• Voter Households
Population:	• All parties
Propensity	• + 40

#### • Approve-Disapprove •

- 1a. Do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of President Barack Obama's performance in office?

	%
Strongly Approve	10.1
Approve	45.7
Disapprove	23.0
Strongly Disapprove	15.7
Undecided	5.6

- 1b. Do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of Governor Peter Shumlin's performance in office?

	%
Strongly Approve	15.4
Approve	53.2
Disapprove	18.2
Strongly Disapprove	6.1
Undecided	7.1

- 1c. Do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the performance of the Vermont State Legislature?

	%
Strongly Approve	5.3
Approve	53.9
Disapprove	24.6
Strongly Disapprove	9.6
Undecided	6.6

• 1<sup>st</sup> Ballot •

2. {GROUP A}

One issue facing the Vermont State Legislature is Doctor-assisted suicide. Bills have been introduced into both the Vermont House and Senate that would make it legal for a doctor to issue lethal prescription drugs to a terminally ill patient to commit suicide. If you were a member of the State Legislature would you most likely vote for or against this bill?

{GROUP B}

One issue facing the Vermont State Legislature is Doctor-Prescribed Death. Bills have been introduced into both the Vermont House and Senate that would make it legal for a doctor to issue lethal prescription drugs to a terminally ill patient to commit suicide. If you were a member of the State Legislature would you most likely vote for or against this bill?

	%
Vote for	57.9
Vote against	38.8
Undecided	3.3

• Debate Block •

Now imagine that you are a judge in a debate between supporters of legalizing doctor-assisted suicide and opponents of doctor-assisted suicide. Please listen to both sides of each short debate then tell me if you think the debate was won by supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide.

3a. **Pain and Suffering**

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide argue that desperate patients often request doctor-assisted suicide to avoid what would otherwise be an inevitably long, slow death.

Opponents argue that this is not an "either/or choice." They say that we must continue to do more to alleviate pain and suffering, but that if doctor-assisted suicide becomes just another treatment option, and a cheap option at that, there will be less and less focus on alleviating pain and more and more emphasis on "efficient" options like death.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?



3b. **Right to Dignity**

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide argue that terminally ill patients have a right to die on their own terms and with their dignity intact. Legislating doctor-assisted suicide assures them a real choice.

Opponents argue that the right to refuse medical treatment already exists and is protected in our current law. We need to protect vulnerable patients who would be at risk of being pressured to choose death by a lethal prescription. That pressure could come from an insurance company that doesn't want to pay a bill or a family member who stands to gain from the patient's death.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?



%

### 3c. Insurance Influence

Opponents argue that with increasing healthcare costs will come the inevitable motivation to keep costs down by encouraging doctor-assisted suicide. What we're talking about is legalizing death by prescription which would allow insurance companies and government payers like Medi-Caid to get involved in a person's end-of-life decisions – to offer death as a cost-effective treatment. That gives patients less choice, not more.

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide argue that such fears are simply not realistic and they call such fears a scare tactic. The real issue is simply whether this alternative should be included as part of the full scope of end-of-life care options.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?



### 3d. Disability

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide argue that experience in Oregon, where doctor-assisted suicide is legal, has shown that fears about abuse or error have not materialized. More than ten years of official reports have debunked any claims of problems with the law.

Opponents of doctor-assisted suicide, including many Vermont disability rights groups, argue that reports about Oregon are unreliable since all information is provided by those involved in assisted-suicide deaths. They also note, and the state has acknowledged, it has no authority to investigate or verify whether the data on which reports are based is accurate or complete.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?

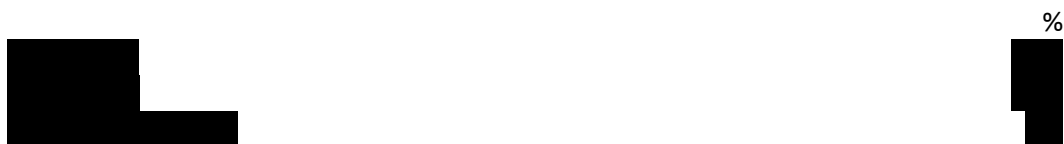


### 3e. Elder Abuse

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide say that terminally ill patients should have the right to choose when and how to die. They argue that this is a compassionate choice that would permit such patients to die at the time of their choosing, surrounded by their family and loved ones.

Opponents say that the option of doctor-prescribed death would come at a time of great vulnerability in a person's life. The sad truth is that sometimes family members do not treat each other with love and respect and that if death by prescription becomes legal, some people – particularly the elderly -- could lose their lives because of pressure or persuasion.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?



### 3f. Safeguards

Supporters of doctor-assisted suicide say that the Vermont proposal to legalize doctor-assisted suicide has safeguards that protect patients from abuse since the patient must request the prescription for the drugs that cause death.

Opponents say that the proposed law would lead to abuse since there are no protections for the patients once the lethal drugs are prescribed. Someone who stands to gain financially for example, could force or trick a patient into taking them and nobody would ever know.

Who do you believe won this debate: supporters or opponents of doctor-assisted suicide?



• 2<sup>nd</sup> Ballot •

4. {GROUP A}

Having heard this information, if you were a member of the State Legislature would you most likely vote for or against the Doctor-assisted suicide bill?

{GROUP B}

Having heard this information, if you were a member of the State Legislature would you most likely vote for or against the Doctor-Prescribed Death bill?

	%
Vote for	51.9
Vote against	41.4
Undecided	6.8

• Political Response •

5. Would you be much more likely, more likely, less likely, or much less likely to vote for a state legislator who voted for a bill to legalize doctor-assisted suicide, or would it make no difference in how you vote?

	%
Much more likely	5.2
More likely	27.8
Less likely	19.2
Much less likely	17.4
Undecided	30.4

• Legislative Priority •

6. {RANDOMIZE ORDER} Some [other] people believe that doctor-assisted suicide is an important issue, and should be a legislative priority for 2012. Other [Some] people believe the legislature should be tackling much more important problems than doctor-assisted suicide.

What about you? Do you believe doctor-assisted suicide should, or should not be a legislative priority for 2012?

	%
Should be a priority	26.4
Should not be a priority	70.8
Undecided	2.8

• Demographics •

7a. Do you consider yourself liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, or conservative?

	%
Liberal	26.0
Somewhat liberal	22.3
Middle-of-the-road	8.2
Somewhat conservative	23.6
Conservative	19.9

7b. Thinking about how you vote, do you usually vote mainly Republican, mainly Democrat, or about the same for each party?

	%
Mainly Republican	22.2
About same for each	36.4
Mainly Democrat	41.4

7c. Please stop me when I read the age group that contains your age...

	%
18-44	16.6
45-54	22.3
55-64	28.6
65-74	19.9
75+	12.5

7d. It is not always easy to vote in every election. Other times people just don't seem motivated to vote. How about you? In the next primary election in Vermont are you very likely, likely, somewhat likely or not likely to vote?

	%
Very likely	73.8
Likely	13.5
Less likely	12.8

7h. Sex

	%
Male	48.0
Female	52.0