



CWA of California
Action Alert
March 8, 2005

Greetings!

Please take a moment to review the fact sheet below about the plight of Terri Schiavo. Florida 6th Judicial Circuit Judge George W. Greer, who has never visited Terri, has ordered that the disabled woman's feeding tube be removed on March 18, at which time she will begin a slow and excruciating death by starvation and dehydration. *Please pray and act on Terri's behalf.* Ask God to work in the hearts and minds of our national leaders and those in Florida so that they may intervene and save her life!

Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) and Congressman David Weldon (R-FL) introduced legislation TODAY that could save not only save Terri's life, but that of others in her situation. The Incapacitated Person's Legal Protection Act (H.R. 1151 and S. 539) will ensure that incapacitated individuals are properly afforded due process, giving them the right to their own counsel to argue their cases. It does not apply to situations where there is an advance directive in place.

Action: Please contact your senators and your member of Congress, asking them to support S. 539 and H.R. 1151 before it is too late for Terri and other disabled persons. We ask that you also contact the leaders of both the House and Senate urging them to speed these bills through Congress without delay. The clock is ticking for Terri.

CA Senators: Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-225-3121 or toll free 877-762-8762

Dianne Feinstein (D) 310-914-7300, 619-231-9712, Fax: 202-228-3954,
<http://feinstein.senate.gov/email.html>

Barbara Boxer (D) 213-894-5000, 619-239-3884, Fax: 619-239-5719, <http://boxer.senate.gov/contact>

House of Representatives: Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-225-3121 or toll free 877-762-8762. Or e-mail your representative by visiting <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) 202-224-3344, Fax: 202-228-1264
House Majority Leader Tom Delay (R-TX) 202-225-5951, Fax: 202-225-5241

Thank you for making a difference!

Terri Schiavo's estranged husband and legal guardian, Michael Schiavo, has consistently not acted in her best interests.

Many stories in the media at this time are about Terri Schiavo in Florida. They center on the battle between her parents, who want her to live, and her estranged husband, who has legal permission to cause her to die by removing her food and water on March 18.

Depending on the media source, many of those stories are giving a one-sided view into Terri's condition and her husband's motive. The intent of this paper is to present a background to the case, which has gone on for years.

Terri has been neurologically disabled since 1990, when her heart stopped and her brain was deprived of oxygen for five minutes. She is physically handicapped and unable to speak at this point, but she is in no way on the brink of death.

- She breathes on her own and is not connected to a ventilator or any other artificial life support.
- Other than her disability, Terri is in good health.
- Because she cannot swallow at this point, Terri is fed through a tube into her stomach. Medical professionals believe that, with therapy, there is a good chance she could re-learn to swallow.
- Removing Terri's food and water would cause a slow, torturous death of 10-15 days.

Terri's estranged husband and legal guardian, Michael Schiavo, has consistently not acted in her best interests.

- After Terri's injury, Michael melted down her engagement and wedding rings and made one for himself. He had her cats put to death.
- In January 1993, he won a malpractice award of \$1.6 million, including \$600,000 for him personally.
- In the malpractice trial, he testified of his love for Terri, his intent to use the money for her, and his commitment to remain faithful to his marriage vows.
- He promised repeatedly to provide rehabilitative care for Terri, but within months of the award he stopped providing physical therapy, dental care and even basic medical care for her. As a result, she has had five teeth extracted.
- Later that year, he refused to allow Terri to receive antibiotics for a urinary tract infection, which if untreated would have led to her death. However, the nursing home staff defied his orders and treated her.
- He has refused to allow a priest to visit Terri, a Catholic, to administer holy communion.
- Michael has admitted being involved with multiple women since Terri's illness and has lived in adultery with a woman since 1996; they have two children.

Far from being a "vegetable," Terri is generally responsive and alert to her environment.

- She consistently responds to people who visit her with smiles, frowns or sullenness, depending on who the person is.
- Her eyes follow guests and objects around her room.
- She moves, laughs, cries and vocalizes emotions.
- She responds to questions and instructions.
- According to a certified speech therapist, Terri attempts to form words and has been heard saying "yes," "no," "Mommy," and, possibly, "Help me."
- She responds to music.

Although her husband's doctors have testified that Terri is in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) with no hope of improvement, other doctors disagree. Dr. William Hammesfahr, a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of brain injuries, has spent approximately 12 hours examining Terri. At an October 24, 2003, press conference, he said that Terri is not in a PVS because:

- She responded to his commands for a standard strength test, even though she has lacked physical therapy for more than 10 years. She pressed her leg against his hand as he pressed down.
- He observed Terri responding to commands to move her limbs into uncomfortable positions-- definitely not involuntary reflexes, as her husband's doctors have asserted.
- By definition, if there is a response to the outside world, the patient isn't in a PVS.
- Dr. Hammesfahr says that he believes Terri could improve and re-gain some (at least) of her faculties.

In their battle to put Terri to death, it is apparent that Michael Schiavo's lawyer and key medical witness have a definite agenda.

- Attorney George Felos is a member of the notorious pro-death Hemlock Society, and the Amazon.com entry for his book says he is "spearheading a social revolution to enable death with dignity in the state of Florida."
- Dr. Ronald Cranford is a leading proponent of the pro-death movement.
- He has testified that spoon feeding is "medical treatment."
- In an op-ed in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, he supported the starvation of people afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.
- He spent about 45 minutes examining Terri.

As the days tick down until March 18, Terri's parents and their lawyers continue to try to get the judge to change his mind and to rescind permission for her feeding tube to be removed. Efforts are underway to introduce a federal law that would prohibit this. Visit www.cwfa.org for updates and action items.

References

Rev. Robert Johansen, "Killing Terri Schiavo," *Crisis* magazine, January 8, 2004, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/january2004/johansen.htm>.

Jeff Johnson, "Florida Woman to be Allowed to Die Despite Family's Wishes," CNSNews.com, November 13, 2002, <http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewNation.asp?Page=\Nation\archive\200308\NAT20030805b.html>.

Diana Lynne, "Life, Death Tug of War in Florida Courtroom," WorldNetDaily, November 13, 2002, http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=29505.