

The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

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RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 P.M. Saturday, July 13, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*".

MOST NEW JERSEYANS ENDORSE LIVING WILLS; MAJORITY DON'T WANT RESTRICTIONS ON CARE THAT CAN BE REFUSED

Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) New Jerseyans support the right of an individual to make a living will and three-quarters (76%) say they would exercise that right if they needed hospital care, according to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*. Also, by a margin of 52 percent to 34 percent, residents believe that there should not be restrictions on the type of treatment that can be refused.

The poll, conducted by telephone between June 18 and 24 with 800 New Jersey adults, shows that almost six-in-ten residents (57%) would choose to specify ahead of time if artificial means of life support should or should not be used on them, and three-in-ten would designate a friend or family member to make the decision for them.

Nearly half (47%) of those surveyed say they will wait until they have the need for hospital care before they make a living will, while about four-in-ten (41%) say they will make a living will before they require care.

Support for Living Will

New Jerseyans strongly support the right of an individual to make a living will. Fully 74 percent "strongly" support this right, and another 14 percent "mildly" support it. Only

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about one-in-twenty (6%) state residents say they oppose the right of an individual to make a living will. Women are much more likely than men to "strongly" support living wills by a margin of 84 percent to 65 percent.

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll commented, "The poll shows that the vast majority of New Jerseyans support the idea of a living will. These results are a strong endorsement of the new living will legislation which became law a few days ago."

The poll also shows that a majority of state residents (52%) feel that an individual making a living will should be able to refuse any type of life support, including feeding tubes. About one-third (34%) say that there should be restrictions on the type of treatment that may be refused. Fifty-eight percent of women say there should be no restrictions, compared to 45 percent of men.

The poll also shows that more than three-quarters (77%) of New Jersey residents report having heard or read about living wills.

Making a Living Will

The large majority of New Jersey residents (76%) also report that they would exercise their right to make a living will if they needed hospital care. Women are more likely than men to say they would make a living will, by a margin of 83 percent to 69 percent.

About four-in-ten (41%) say they will consider preparing a living will before they might need medical care at a hospital, while nearly half of the state's residents (47%) say they would not consider a living will until they had the need for hospital treatment.

Dautrich said, "Not only is support for the living will strong, but most people plan to exercise that right either before or at the time they need hospital care. These results show that hospitals might expect a large number of patients interested in making a living will."

In addition, 57 percent of New Jersey residents say they would personally specify ahead of time if artificial means of life support should or should not be used, while 30 percent report that their living will would designate a friend or family member to make that decision.

BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP34-3 (EP84-3), SUNDAY, JULY 14, 1991

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between June 18 and June 24, 1991, when a random sample of 800 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 3.5 percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"On another topic, there has been discussion lately about legalizing living wills. A living will is when adults decide ahead of time if artificial means of life support should or should not be used when they become unable to make medical decisions on their own. Have you read or heard anything about living wills? If "YES", how much, a lot, some or just a little?" [Q.31]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	29%	30%	18%	22%	1%	100%	(800)

"Do you support or oppose the right of an individual to make a living will? (If necessary, read description of living will again: a living will allows people to indicate ahead of time whether artificial means of life support should or should not be used if they become unable to make medical decisions.) (PROBE: Do you support/oppose it strongly or mildly?)" [Q.33]

	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Mildly Support</u>	<u>Mildly Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	74%	14%	2%	4%	1%	5%	100%	(800)

Gender

--Male	65	20	2	4	1	8	100	(404)
--Female	84	8	2	3	2	1	100	(396)

"A 'living will' gives the patient the option of either specifying ahead of time if artificial means of life support should or should not be used, or designating a friend or family member to make that decision. If you were to make a living will, do you think you would specify ahead of time if life support should or should not be used or would you designate a friend or family member to decide?" [Q.34]

	<u>Would Specify Ahead of Time</u>	<u>Would Designate Someone</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	57%	30%	6%	7%	100%	(800)

Gender

--Male	49	35	5	11	100	(404)
--Female	65	25	6	3	99	(396)

"Do you think that you will make a living will before you might need medical care at a hospital, or will you wait until you have the need for treatment before considering a living will?" [Q.35]

	<u>Will make Living Will Before Need</u>	<u>Will Wait Until Have Need For Hospital Care</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	41%	47%	12%	100%	(800)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>					
--Male	35	51	14	100	(404)
--Female	46	44	10	100	(396)

"Beginning this December, patients receiving any kind of treatment in most hospitals will be told of their right to make a living will. If you were to require hospital care, would you make a living will, or not?" [Q.36]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	76%	12%	7%	6%	101%	(800)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>						
--Male	69	17	7	8	101	(404)
--Female	83	6	6	4	99	(396)

"Some say that while they support the idea of a living will, there should be some restrictions on the type of treatment that may be refused, such as feeding tubes. Others feel that an individual should be able to refuse any type of artificial life support. What do you think? Should there be restrictions on what may be refused or shouldn't there be restrictions?" [Q.37]

	<u>Should Be Restrictions</u>	<u>Should Not Be Restricted</u>	<u>Depends On What Is Restricted</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Sure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	34%	52%	8%	7%	101%	(800)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>						
--Male	40	45	6	9	100	(404)
--Female	28	58	9	5	100	(396)