

# **FINAL EXIT NETWORK:**

## **Continuing the Fight for End-of-Life Autonomy**

In 2015, Minnesota prosecuted Final Exit Network (FEN) for exercising its right of free speech when our guides provided information on how to achieve self-deliverance. The prosecutor bragged about his attempt to put us out of business. No media in the state spoke up for us.

FEN was labeled a "secret society", an underground death cult, a fringe element in the right to die movement.

Not anymore.

We refused to be silenced. We refused to abandon our Minnesota members. And in May of this year, two of our guides sat in a living room in Minnesota talking to an individual who had qualified for FEN services and wanted to end her suffering.

The police arrived. Our guides' belongings were seized and the guides remain under threat of criminal indictment for talking about how a person who is suffering physically can end her life on her terms.

But this time, the media have reacted differently. Readers are hearing the truth. Far from demonizing us, the local Fox News accurately stated our mission "to inform qualified individuals on end-of-life options to terminate pain and suffering."

They quoted a local attorney, not connected with the case. "In order for you to criminalize something, you have to physically do something," said attorney Joe Tamburino. "It can't just be words. And if it's words, then it has to be such a level of words that it survives strict scrutiny."

Indeed, the prosecutors haven't yet figured out any words to respond to the press.

The Minnesota Star Tribune ran a similar story on May 20. In describing FEN, the reporter stated, "Investigators researched the backgrounds of the two men and saw that they 'have found ways to complete the end-of-life cycle peacefully'."

Indeed, we have.

FEN is "suing Anoka County authorities alleging that their free-speech rights were violated when they were interrupted by law enforcement during a recent meeting with a terminally ill woman. "

Indeed, we are.

This positive coverage is being reflected in the wider media. A favorable reference in the Oscar-winning film "Nomadland" sent sales of the Final Exit book soaring. A new non-fiction book, "The Inevitable", devoted a full chapter to Final Exit Network. The New Yorker cites FEN in its May 17 article, "We've Had Great Success Extending Life. What About Ending It?".

Finally, the proponents of Medical Aid in Dying laws are also paying attention and saying out loud what we've been saying for years: The laws are not perfect. In fact, they were a political compromise made at the expense of millions of severely-ill individuals who do not qualify.

FEN will keep fighting until our mission is accomplished. We are not the fringe of the death with dignity movement. We are the vanguard.