THE REGISTER'S EDITORIAL

Iowans want 'death with dignity' option

State lawmakers should finally face realities of dying

A terminally ill Iowan who is ready to die should not have to shoot herself in the head. Or stockpile pills. Or beg a loved one to smother him. Or crawl over a balcony railing to end the suffering. In a civilized society that claims to value liberty, people in their final days of life should be able to die peacefully and when they choose.

The majority of Iowans agree. A recent Des Moines Register/Mediacom Iowa Poll found 59 percent of Iowans favor establishing a legal process in which terminally ill people could obtain lethal medications from a doctor. Only 35 percent oppose this. Yet about the same time the poll was being conducted in February, a so-called "Death with Dignity" bill failed to advance in the Iowa Legislature.

Senate File 2051 would allow terminally ill Iowans the ability to request and receive medication to end their own lives. The legislation includes numerous safeguards, including verification from two physicians a person has less than six months to live. Patients would need to make both oral and written requests for medication and be subjected to waiting periods. There is a provision for counseling and requirements for documentation.

Unfortunately, lawmakers swallow the fear-mongering dished up to them on this issue. Opponents argue the legislation would devalue the sanctity of human life, but truly respecting life means recognizing its limits. Every single one of us is going to die. If the end is coming in the form of a painful, agonizing illness, how does forcing someone to give up control, wait and suffer translate into valuing life?

Assisted suicide laws are

See EDITORIAL, Page 4OP

50 YEARS TO THE DAY

THE MOST MOMENTOUS GAME IN NCAA HISTORY

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Saturday was the exact 50th anniversary of arguably the most significant NCAA tournament game ever played, the 1966 championship between Kentucky and Texas Western, which the latter won with the first-ever all African-American starting line-up.

I know this may be hard to believe, but in the pre-ESPN sports era, the NCAA tournament was a truncated affair with only 22 teams compared to the current field of 68. Amazingly, the NCAA championship game wasn't televised nationally, and "March Madness" was the slogan of the annual Illinois state high school tournament.

As a 24-year-old graduate student at the University of Maryland, I scored a ticket to Cole Field House where that historic contest took place. I remember watching Kentucky play Duke in one semi-final game that had all the buzz of being the national championship contest. The crowd exhibited south-

See GAME, Page 4OP

Main photo: Kentucky's Thad Jaracz (55) and Texas Western's David Latin (42) reach for a rebound during the NCAA men's basketball championship game on March 19, 1966 in College Park, Md. Texas Western won the game 72-65, becoming the first team with an all-black starting lineup to win an NCAA championship.

AP FILE PHOTOS

Right: Texas Western coach Don Haskins, center, is congratulated a day after the win.

A half-century ago Saturday, a historic NCAA game shattered the prejudiced belief in the inherent superiority of white athletes

Can women, minorities expect fair treatment by chief?

One picture shows a woman gagged, her wrists and ankles bound with duct tape. "Boundaries," says

ployees," with whom they were shared. One picture imposed the face of a local sheriff onto the body of a uniformed police

ing the exposure and a petition drive will generate enough public outrage to result in the chief's removal.

and poisoned watermelon. Another shows a car with an Arizona license plate and "I'm Mexican, pull me over," writ-

U.S. is enough to produce power for 19 million American homes. That's also enough power to drive 26 million electric cars around the world.

No region of the United States exemplifies this progress better than the American heartland.

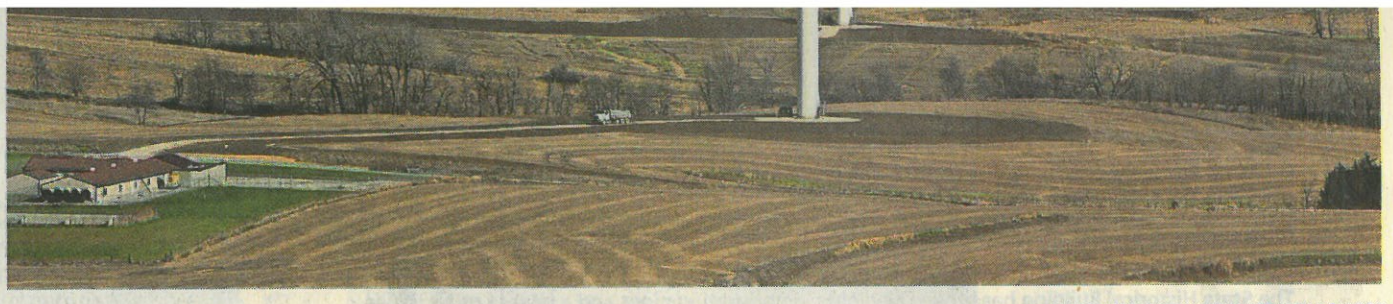
More than 31 percent of Iowa's electricity was generated by wind power last year , the first time a U.S. state topped the 30 percent milestone.

Similar gains have been made in Minnesota, where in a little over a decade, the amount of electricity generated by wind increased from three percent in 2005 to more than 17 percent in 2015.

A dozen states now use wind to reliably produce at least 10 percent of their electricity.

Meanwhile, the manufacturing sector in Michigan and Illinois has been rejuvenated because of wind power. These longtime hubs for Made-in-the-USA products are now forging ahead as leaders in wind turbine assembly with 72 wind-related factories. Combined with the jobs created to build and maintain wind farms, wind supports 8,000 well-paying jobs with benefits spread across both states.

The good news is that wind power is just getting started. Because of taller towers, longer blades, improved gearboxes and more than 30 years of experience siting wind turbines to maximize power output, wind's costs have by fallen two-thirds in the last six years.



BRYON HOULGRAVE/REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Wind turbines in rural Macksburg.

These savings are passed on to American families and businesses. During 2014's "Polar Vortex" weather event, wind saved Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic consumers more than $1 billion in just two days. And as the U.S. has increasingly generated more of its electricity from renewable energy, electricity rates across the U.S. have remained 5.5 percent lower than they were in 2009.

Generating more electricity from wind energy in these states could result in even more savings for consumers across the heartland. According to data calculated using the U.S. Department of Energy's *Wind Vision* report, through 2050 consumers in Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota could save a combined $10.97 billion on their electricity bills. That's on top of more than $36 billion in savings resulting from protection against conventional fuel price spikes.

America's heartland is leading the way toward a homegrown, affordable, clean energy future. It provides a clear example for the rest of the country that expanding our share of wind power can create jobs while saving money, strengthening America's energy independence and improving lives along the way.

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GAME

Continued from Page 1OP

ern frenzy, waving Confederate flags as the pep band played "Dixie." Duke led by a point at the half, but a last-minute surge gave Kentucky an 83-79 victory.

The second semi-final game seemed by comparison a desultory afterthought in which the Texas Western Miners prevailed over Utah 85-78. The Saturday night final game was seen as being so anti-climactic, that numerous fans were giving away their tickets as they exited Cole Field House.

But I was there on Saturday, March 19 to watch the final. As the starting time approached, a familiar college football player with his entourage came to stand beside me and watch — Broadway Joe Namath.

When the teams lined up for the tip off, it suddenly became apparent just how unusual this contest would be. For there, wearing their white and blue Kentucky uniforms, were five white players, while the Texas Western starting team in gold were all African-Americans. Never before had an all-black team started the national championship game.

The mid-1960s were a time of dramatic change and considerable volatility in terms of civil rights and integration. Despite major legislation, de facto segregation still existed in many forms, including in college sports. Adolph Rupp's Kentucky, like many other southern teams, had an all-white roster and was not open to recruiting black players.

Led by point guard Bobby Joe Hill, the Miners played carefully, making few mistakes and penetrating to get good shots close to the basket. They controlled the tempo of the game and, keeping the usually boisterous Kentucky fans subdued, had the lead at the half.

AP FILE PHOTO

Texas Western basketball coach Don Haskins, second from left, and players celebrate after winning the NCAA basketball championship on March 19, 1966 in College Park, Md.

Conventional wisdom in the stands was that this would be reversed in the second half. Kentucky's skill and experience would eventually dominate, and as the band played "Dixie" and the crowd waved the stars-and-bars flag, the Wildcats would seize their fifth national championship.

But as the second half played on, Texas Western continued to control the flow of the game and the Kentucky effort to stage a comeback faltered. As the time inexorably wound down to just under two minutes, I remember looking up at the scoreboard and suddenly realizing that maybe, just maybe, the impossible was about to become a reality.

The final score of the game was 72-65, but in terms of national implications for college sports and opportunity for African-American athletes, the result was an extraordinary breakthrough and a dramatic acceleration of integration. College basketball and sports would never be the same, as the prejudiced belief in the inherent superiority of white athletes was left shattered on the floor of Cole Field House.

In an interesting parallel, the calendars of 1966 and 2016 match precisely so that Saturday, March 19 was the exact 50th anniversary of that stunning Saturday upset. It seems especially fitting that Kentucky played here in Des Moines, since it was a victory in the Iowa City regional, five decades earlier, that propelled them to that most storied game in all NCAA basketball history.

My son Shandon and I had tickets to watch Kentucky play. While I may have been the only person at Wells Fargo Arena that night who was also at Cole Field House, the implications of that improbable Texas Western victory will be evident on the roster of every team playing.

EDITORIAL

Continued from Page 1OP

not abused. They do not encourage suicide. Iowa's legislation is modeled after Oregon's 1997 Death with Dignity Act, a citizen's initiative overwhelmingly supported by voters. In nearly two decades only 1,545 people have obtained written prescriptions for a lethal dose of medication and fewer than 1,000 have actually died from ingesting the drug.

In 2015, 132 people chose to ingest the medication to end their lives — about one-third the number of people who die in Iowa car accidents annually. The median age of these individuals was 73 and the vast majority had malignant cancer. More than 90 percent of them were able to die at home and almost all were receiving hospice care. Of the 106 physicians who wrote prescriptions for lethal medication, not a single one was reported for failure to comply with the law's requirements.

Iowa's recent poll on assisted suicide, like numerous national polls, reveals what most of us already know: If we find ourselves in the throes of an unbearable, terminal illness, we want options. We want the options granted to residents of California, Washington, Vermont, Montana and Oregon. The Iowa Legislature should finally ensure Iowans have them.

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Continued from Page 1OP

say what else was done, other than having his office look into training for the entire police department.

Leinen said the photos shouldn't make Emswiler, who he said has had no previous disciplining in 21 years on the force, any less effective at his job. I asked Emswiler how domestic violence or sexual assault victims could think he takes those crimes seriously, or how Mexican and black people could feel confident in equal enforcement of the law.

"I think you're entitled to your opinion," was his response. He didn't deny the images, or claim he had them for training or other valid purposes, as the mayor — without asking Emswiler — suggested he might have. Nor did he disavow their message, saying those seeking his removal are "disgruntled employees." In his public apology, he acknowledged only that some material could be considered offensive to others, but that it wasn't intended for public viewing.

But Knowles wrote, "I say there are thoughts of depravity so deep, crimes so egregious that no 'get out of jail free card' can apply."

Leinen accused Knowles of misleading and suggested he was put up to it by someone. But Knowles, a Denison native and property owner living in Carroll whose family once owned the Denison Bulletin and Review, insists he's not involved in anything.

The mayor and chief turned the conversation to two police officers who were disciplined for other reasons. Ray Ohl was fired in February over reasons that were not made public. Officer Brian Wendt was suspended after the state Department of Natural Resources accused him of hunting violations. Emswiler's apology noted accusingly, "the photos and memes only surfaced after Officer Wendt was placed on Administrative Leave and Ray Ohl was terminated from employment and his demands for reinstatement were denied."

Some protesters have complained the chief's offenses were worse. But Leinen said those officers "did illegal acts," and that with one officer suspended and another fired, he couldn't have justified also firing the police chief.

After I called Emswiler and Leinen, I was contacted by state Sen. Jason Schultz and Rep. Steven Holt, both Republicans representing Crawford County. Both expressed support for Emswiler, noting his various contributions to veterans and youth in the community. Schultz said the pictures didn't offset "all the good he's trying to do for the world."

Yes, everyone makes mistakes, but we're not just talking about using a city-owned computer and time to play with vulgar and offensive materials. We're talking about a mindset that seems to minimize rape, find humor in racial profiling and attack the most vulnerable in the community. The police chief has yet to say that's not true.

It's even more disturbing that local officials are closing ranks around him with lame excuses and no reassurances to do right by those communities. The more they dig their heels in, the more tone deaf they seem. The people of Denison deserve better.