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No impact in Arizona from ruling on suicide

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CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — A U.S. Supreme Court ruling Tuesday upholding Oregon's assisted suicide law has no impact in Arizona, where lawmakers have rebuffed repeated attempts to pass similar legislation.

Rep. Linda Lopez, D-Tucson, has sought legislation that allows a patient to ask for a fatal dose of medication in front of two witnesses. Two doctors have to certify the patient is within six months of death.

A second request must come at least 15 days later. There also is a provision requiring the patient be referred for counseling if there is a belief they are suffering from a disorder or depression causing impaired judgment.

Lopez said she was deeply affected as a 12-year-old girl, watching her grandfather, suffering from cancer, "waste away."

"He asked me to bring a gun for him," she said three years ago — the only year she managed to get a hearing for her perennial measure. She said he had several strokes, was incontinent, blind and essentially paralyzed.

"He was just miserable and didn't want to live any more," she said. "Nothing much was working except for his brain."

But Rep. Bill Konopnicki, R-Safford, said he had a different response to a similar experience, watching his wife take two years to die.

"I would not trade that 27 months for anything," he said tearfully. "What I learned about life, love, compassion, service, families and what's important is something, had she chosen to cheat us out of, is something that would have been lost eternally."

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