

Politicians still wrong on Terri's case



By WND Staff

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Presidential candidate and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney recently stated, "My view was a case like this would normally be left in the hands of a court."

Romney was referring to the attempt by Congress to help save the life of my sister, Terri Schiavo. He mistakenly assumed passing the buck on this issue would gain him political capital. He could not be more wrong, morally or politically.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government." Sadly, many of our politicians have abandoned this basic principle, and in so doing have abdicated their most crucial role as public servants.

But not all of the blame lies with them. Romney's comments and similar remarks made by other politicians about Terri's situation have, in my opinion, been prejudiced by a media that have oversimplified what Congress did by spinning it as "meddling in a private family affair."

In reality, Congress enacted a law to afford my sister's constitutional and statutory civil rights claims to be heard in federal court. *This law already exists for every convicted murderer on death row.*

If monsters like Ted Bundy or Scott Peterson are afforded this right after their cases have gone through the state court system, why shouldn't an innocent disabled woman be given that same chance before she is cruelly

starved and dehydrated to death? Congress was not only justified in getting involved, I believe it was their duty.

Moreover, the whole notion purported by Michael Schiavo and echoed by the media that Terri's case was a "private family matter" is ludicrous.

Starving and dehydrating someone to death is never a "private family matter," any more than abusing a child or a spouse is a "private family matter."

Laws rightly move such decisions out of the family setting and into a domain where government, if doing its job, can protect the lives of victims. Calling the right to abuse or even kill someone a "private family matter" protects only the abuser.

More ironic is that Michael Schiavo himself made this a public spectacle when he asked the government to intervene via the court system to remove Terri's feeding tube in 1998.

It is laughable to then complain Congress got involved in a "private family matter" when by that time Terri's case was getting so much worldwide media attention it was about as private as the Super Bowl.

Finally, it is still grossly underreported that Michael began a new "family" by living with another woman for a decade, admittedly asking her to marry him in 1994 and fathering two children with her while still married to and making life and death decisions for Terri.

The truth is Terri's real family asked Congress to get involved. Congress didn't wake up one morning and arbitrarily decide to weigh in. An enormous groundswell of support caused tens of thousands of constituents to contact their senators and congressmen, which resulted in the congressional effort to give Terri a fair hearing. This was exactly how our system of government was supposed to work.

It would behoove politicians like Romney to research the facts of Terri's case as well as the public response to it before cavalierly dismissing it as a matter for the courts. Just two days after my sister's death, a Zogby poll asked a question accurately reflecting Terri's circumstances:

If a disabled person is not terminally ill, not in a coma, and not being kept alive on life support, and they have no written directive, should or should they not be denied food and water?

Completely ignored by our "fair and balanced" media, 79 percent of respondents agreed with keeping Terri alive while only 9 percent believed she should be killed.

Another poll question asked about the involvement of Congress:

When there is conflicting evidence on whether or not a patient would want to be on a feeding tube, should elected officials order that a feeding tube be removed or should they order that it remain in place?

Forty-two percent said the feeding tube should remain in place and only 18 percent said it should be removed.

Despite activist judges who were determined to kill my sister, and despite a liberal media that continue to do all they can to justify her death, Congress should never regret their efforts to stop the needless and deliberate killing of an innocent woman.

They had every right, and in fact a legal obligation, to make that effort and should vow to do what they can to stop future lethal bigotry against the disabled.

In the end it is neither political capital nor winning elections that will matter. We will all be judged, and not by any earthly court, for how we treated the most vulnerable among us. That, ultimately, will mark our greatness or seal our fate as a nation.

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