

AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE FELLOW MARC THIESSEN:
“THANK REPUBLICANS FOR YOUR RIGHT TO TRY”

“Thanks to Trump, Americans facing terminal diagnoses will now have a chance at life.”

Thank Republicans for your right to try

By Marc A. Thiessen

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Imagine the horror of learning you have a terminal illness for which science has not yet come up with a treatment. Now imagine receiving the same diagnosis, and then learning a promising new treatment exists that could save your life — but you can’t get access to it thanks to governmental obstacles.

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[Michelle] Wittenberg formed “Andi’s Army” to lobby the Texas state legislature to pass a “Right to Try” law which would grant those in Texas with terminal illnesses (and who have exhausted all FDA-approved treatments) access to investigational drugs — so long as they have been proven safe in clinical trials, are part of the FDA’s ongoing evaluation process, and the company developing the medication is willing to make it available. In 2015, Gov. Greg Abbott (R) signed the “Andrea Sloan Right to Try Act” into law.

Today, 40 states have passed similar laws (including Indiana, where then-Gov. Mike Pence signed it into law). And on Wednesday, President Trump will sign a national Right to Try Act into law.

In the states, Right to Try has not been a partisan issue. The first 24 state legislatures approved the bills by a collective vote of 3,045 to 26. In most instances, it passed without a single dissenting vote. The issue brought together politicians who never worked together on any other issue.

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But, sadly, this spirit of bipartisanship did not translate to Washington. Only 22 House Democrats voted for the final bill that Trump will sign. In August, a version introduced by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) passed the Senate by unanimous consent, but stalled in the House, which eventually passed a more limited bill from Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.). Last week, Senate Republicans tried to accommodate Democratic objections by bringing up the Walden bill for a vote, but Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) blocked it from coming to the floor. So the House passed the Johnson version, with Democrats nearly united in opposition.

In other words, Democrats in Washington managed to take an issue that unified literally thousands of legislators from both parties in 40 states, and turned it into a divisive, party-line vote. Thanks to Trump, Americans facing terminal diagnoses will now have a new chance at life. How tragic — and pathetic — that Democrats refused to join him in making that happen.

[Read the full op-ed here.](#)

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