

Terri Schiavo's Family Reacts to France's "Terri Schiavo" Case *Weighs in on Jeb Bush's Presidential Bid*



PHILADELPHIA, June 16, 2015 – The family of Terri Schiavo is reacting to a court ruling that allows Vincent Lambert, the man known as the “Terri Schiavo of France” to be starved and dehydrated to death. “With so many questions in this case, why would you err on the side of death? As in my sister’s situation, we don’t know what Vincent’s wishes are,” says Terri Schiavo’s brother, Bobby Schindler, who is executive director of the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network. “Vincent’s parents are willing to care for him and have the right to do so. We strongly support their efforts and oppose the court’s ruling.”

Lambert experienced a profound brain injury seven years ago after a motorcycle accident. His wife and some siblings agree with a doctor’s recommendation that his life should end. But Lambert’s parents and other siblings say he is showing progress and needs better care. On June 5, a court ruled that the decision to stop intravenously feeding Lambert did not violate European laws.

“This case parallels my sister Terri’s case in so many ways,” says Schindler. “Vincent’s family is fighting for his life, wanting to continue therapy. Since Terri’s death, there have been dramatic breakthroughs in treatment and promise of new technologies on the horizon. There are documented cases in which brain-injured patients become capable of moderate levels of consciousness and actually regain some level of functionality. There are also cases on record where such patients regain full functionality and today live active, independent lives.”

On this tenth anniversary year of Terri Schiavo’s death, the case has resurfaced leading up to the 2016 presidential campaign and Jeb Bush’s candidacy. “I always felt Governor Bush was sincere,” says Schindler. “He never backpedaled and he worked hard to help Terri. When Congress passed Terri’s Law, it was one of the most bipartisan laws enacted at the time, passing unanimously in the Senate with no objections. In the House, the bill passed 203-58.”

Today, a growing number of laws put life and death treatment decisions in the hands of hospital boards, ethics committees and healthcare professionals. “Our hope is that a nominee for president would support efforts to protect people in medically vulnerable situations,” Schindler adds. “Protecting those who cannot advocate for themselves is the mission behind the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network, and we are raising awareness around this issue and advocating for change.”

The Philadelphia-based nonprofit has responded to requests from more than a thousand families, supporting them with advocacy, guidance and resources at no charge.

“Many family members are willing to take on the responsibility of care and the long, hard work of rehabbing their loved ones to higher levels of consciousness. All they ask is for the right to do so,” says Schindler.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

NouSoma Communications, Inc., 610-658-5889; Ellen Langas, ellen@nousoma.com, 610-256-2946; Kristen Stewart, kristen@nousoma.com, 215-508-3004

Background: *In 1990, at age 26, a healthy Terri Schindler Schiavo collapsed and was admitted to a St. Petersburg, Florida hospital where she was diagnosed with a profound brain injury. When her husband Michael eventually lobbied successfully to have her feeding tube removed, even though her family pleaded to provide for her care, a national debate unfolded. In response to the urging of tens of thousands, Governor Bush advocated to keep Terri alive, and Terri’s Law was passed in 2003. The law enabled feeding to be resumed, but was later overturned. In 2005, with an overwhelming majority, Congress signed a bill into law allowing a federal court to intervene, but after a perfunctory review, the federal court refused to stop Terri’s dehydration death. She died after 13 days of being without food or water. For more information, visit lifeandhope.com*

