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## Conscience bill amendment passes House over objections

BOISE — The House passed legislation on Monday to change Idaho's "conscience law" so end-of-life decisions made in advance by the dying would be respected.

But the legislation, which passed 51-17, drew objections from lawmakers who said it didn't go far enough to protect patient rights put in jeopardy by the original law.

The "conscience law" that passed the Legislature last year gave health care professionals the right to opt out of providing any care they object to based on religious, moral or ethical grounds. It created concerns that a comatose patient's end-of-life wishes, outlined in advance in a living will, could be ignored by health care professionals who cite the new law and refuse to end life support.

The legislation approved Monday directs physicians to follow the wishes of living wills before ending their care for that patient. It still faces a vote in the Senate.

"I think it eliminates some conflict," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Julie Ellsworth.

But Rep. Leon Smith, R-Twin Falls, said the new bill's language is too narrow because it only mentions physicians and doesn't mention any other types of health professionals.

Before voting against the legislation, he recommended that legislators slightly amend the proposal and add the phrase: "other health care providers."

"We really need that language in there and then it's OK," Smith said. "Then all these people who are unhappy with it would be happy with it."

House Minority Leader John Rusche, D-Lewiston, said other health care professionals are involved in end-of-life decisions, including emergency medical technicians and nurses.

"For the life of me I cannot figure out how that is consistent," he said.

Ellsworth countered that the bill's fine the way it is because living wills already require physicians to make findings.