

In 1975, 21-year-old Karen Ann Quinlan was admitted to the hospital in a coma, and was later declared by doctors to be in a "persistent vegetative state." After five months on a ventilator, her parents requested that the ventilator be removed and that Ms. Quinlan be allowed to die. After doctors refused, her parents brought the matter to court.

The New Jersey Superior Court denied her parents' request, but the New Jersey Supreme Court reversed and ruled that Quinlan's "right to privacy" included her right to be removed from the ventilator.