

Nancy Beth Cruzan was involved in an automobile accident that left her in a "persistent vegetative state." After being sustained for several weeks by artificial feedings, her parents attempted to end life-support, but state hospital officials refused to do so without court approval.

A state trial court authorized the termination of feeding, but the Missouri Supreme Court reversed. In a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the Missouri Supreme Court, finding that the State of Missouri's actions to preserve human life were constitutional in the absence of "clear and convincing evidence" that Cruzan desired treatment to be withdrawn.