

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 5545

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Using fees to develop and maintain a web-based vital records system.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Esser, Reardon, Poulsen, Sheahan and Winsley; by request of Department of Health).

**Senate Committee on Technology & Communications**

**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Since 1907, the state Department of Health has maintained the state's vital records and statistics on births and deaths. Certified copies of birth and death certificates may be obtained either directly from the state Department of Health, or from local health departments. Since initiation of the state's Automated Birth Certificate system in 1992, approximately 85 percent of all certificates have come to be issued locally.

The fee for birth and death certificates is the same, whether the certificate is issued by the state or locally. Certified copies of birth and death certificates cost \$13 a copy. Additional copies of death certificates ordered at the same time as the first cost \$8 each.

Five dollars of each fee is placed in the "death investigations account," which funds, among other things, the state toxicology lab and county autopsy costs. The balance of the fee remains with the agency issuing the certificate. Locally collected fees are not shared with the Department of Health to support operation and maintenance of the statewide repository.

Fees were increased by \$2 in 1997 to support the death investigations account. The last fee increase to support general system operation was in 1988.

In 2002, the Legislature directed the Department of Health to study the feasibility of implementing an electronic death registration system. In January 2003, the department issued a report recommending development and implementation of such a system by 2005. The report also recommended a fee increase for certified copies of vital records to fund the project.

**Summary:** The state and local fee for all certified copies of birth and death certificates is raised to \$17. Local registrars may collect an additional service fee if payment is by credit card, debit card, or other electronic means. All fees paid locally stay with the local health jurisdiction, except for the following: (1) \$5 of each fee collected for birth certificates and death certificates is placed in the death investigations account; (2) \$2 of each fee is transferred to the Department of Health to support operation and maintenance of the statewide vital records system; and (3) \$7 of each fee collected for additional copies of death certificates ordered at the same time as the first copy go to the Department of Health to

develop and maintain the state vital records system, including the implementation of a web-based electronic death registration system.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0	
House	77	20	(House amended)
Senate	44	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 27, 2003