

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2300

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*As Reported By House Committee on:  
Local Government*

**Title:** An act relating to death and burial records.

**Brief Description:** Allowing issuance of a burial-transit permit before a death certificate has been completed.

**Sponsor(s):** Representative Peery.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Local Government, February 7, 1992, DPS.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Staff:** Steve Lundin (786-7127).

**Majority Report:** *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 15 members: Representatives Haugen, Chair; Cooper, Vice Chair; Ferguson; Ranking Minority Member; Mitchell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Edmondson; Franklin; Horn; Nealey; Nelson; Rayburn; Roland; Wood; Wynne; and Zellinsky.

**Background:**

A system of state and local registers exists for the filing and retention of vital documents, such as death certificates.

A death certificate must include the cause of death that is certified by the attending physician or by the health officer or coroner if there is no attending physician. The local registrar issues a burial-transit permit when a complete death certificate is filed that includes a cause of death. However, a permit for the disposition of a body may be issued if requested when the cause of death cannot be determined within three days.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The old laws relating to issuing of death certificates are repealed and replaced by a new statute. All items on a death certificate must be completed before it may be filed.

Provisions are made for the filing of a death certificate in the local jurisdiction where a body is found if the cause or date of death are not known. Provision is made for the filing of a death certificate where a body is removed from a conveyance in this state.

The funeral director who assumes custody of a body is required to file the death certificate. Personal data is obtained from the next of kin or best qualified person or source available.

The cause of death is obtained from the attending physician, coroner, or medical examiner. The cause of death must be completed and made available to the funeral director within 48 hours after death. Provision is made for a statement of the cause of death to the best knowledge and belief of the person who indicates what the cause of death was. Provision is made for completing the certificate of death if there is no attending physician. An "unknown" cause of death may be inserted pending investigation of the cause of death.

Final disposition or removal of a body may not occur unless authorized by the local registrar or sub-deputy local registrar.

***Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:*** The bill is completely rewritten to add provisions relating to establishing the cause of death.

***Fiscal Note:*** Not requested.

***Effective Date of Substitute Bill:*** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

***Testimony For:*** This is a good bill. We are perfecting old law that is very unclear.

***Testimony Against:*** (substitute bill) None.

***Witnesses:*** (substitute bill - in favor): Elizabeth Ward, Department of Health; Doug Twibell, Washington State Funeral Directors Association; T.K. Bentler, Washington Funeral Directors Association; and Dr. Barbara Anderson, Island County Coroner.