

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1032

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,  
APRIL 2, 1991

**Brief Description:** Providing county reimbursement for selected transportation of human remains.

**SPONSORS:** Representatives Haugen, Ferguson, Cooper, Nealey and Chandler.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chairman; Roach, Vice Chairman; Madsen, and Sutherland.

**Staff:** Barbara Howard (786-7410)

**Hearing Dates:** April 2, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

A county is not allowed to charge for the removal of any body to the county morgue or for the care of the remains at the county morgue. After investigation, and at the request of relatives or friends, the remains are delivered anywhere in the city without charge.

A fellowship program has been created at the University of Washington's School of Medicine to train one person a year in forensic pathology.

A nine-member death investigation council, consisting of various law enforcement officials, one state legislator, and one pathologist in private practice has oversight responsibility for the state toxicology laboratory. This council and the president of the University of Washington control the laboratory's operations.

Three dollars of the charge imposed for issuing a certified copy of vital statistic records, such as a death certificate, is credited to the death investigations account to finance the state toxicology laboratory, the state dental investigation system, the state death investigations council, and the state forensic pathology fellowship program.

**SUMMARY:**

The county must pay reasonable costs for transporting human remains whenever a coroner or medical examiner assumes jurisdiction and directs the remains to be transported by a funeral establishment if the funeral establishment is not providing the final services or the funeral establishment providing the services is required to transport the remains to a facility other than its own.

Any costs incurred after the coroner or medical examiner releases jurisdiction over human remains are not borne by the county, except for the burial of indigent persons, and indigent veterans or their family members, or if such costs are incurred in operating a county cemetery.

The state death investigations council and the chairperson of the Pathology Department of the University of Washington's School of Medicine jointly administer the state forensic pathology fellowship program and determine both the program's budget and the salary of the fellow.

Disbursements from the death investigations account are specifically made to: (1) the state toxicology laboratory; (2) counties for the costs of certain autopsies, (3) the University of Washington for the state forensic pathology fellowship program; (4) the Washington State Patrol for the dental identification system; (5) the Criminal Justice Training Commission; and (6) the state death investigations council.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:**

The Death Investigation Council is required to develop a special curriculum for training coroners, investigators and first responders in sudden unexplained child deaths. The council works with the SIDS Northwest Regional Center, the SIDS Foundation and the Washington Association of County Officials.

The scope of the project includes all sudden, unexplained child deaths up to age three. When an appropriate curriculum is agreed upon by the council, the training module will be offered to the officials as individuals or through their associations, and as a course at the Criminal Justice Training Center.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

The two components of the bill represent resolution of a difference among coroners and funeral home operators, and a

clarification of the management and budgeting for the forensic pathology fellowship at the University of Washington.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Jim Goche, Washington Association of County Officials representing the County Coroners Association (pro)