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SENATE BILL 5542

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State of Washington

52nd Legislature

1991 Regular Session

By Senator Roach.

Read first time February 6, 1991. Referred to Committee on Children & Family Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to sudden infant death syndrome; adding a new  
2 section to chapter 68.50 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares that  
5 sudden infant death syndrome is the leading cause of death for children  
6 under age one, striking one out of every five hundred children. The  
7 legislature finds and declares that sudden infant death syndrome is a  
8 serious problem within the state of Washington, and that public  
9 interest is served by research and study of the potential causes and  
10 indications of sudden infant death syndrome and the prevention of  
11 inaccurate designation of sudden infant death syndrome as a cause of  
12 death.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 68.50 RCW  
14 to read as follows:

1           (1) For purposes of this section, "sudden infant death syndrome"  
2 means the sudden death of any infant that is unexpected by the history  
3 of the infant and where a thorough postmortem examination fails to  
4 demonstrate an adequate cause of death.

5           (2) The coroner or medical examiner shall, within twenty-four  
6 hours, or as soon thereafter as feasible, perform an autopsy in any  
7 case where an infant has died suddenly and unexpectedly, and is  
8 suspected to have died as a result of sudden infant death syndrome.

9           (3) A coroner or medical examiner shall not be liable for damages  
10 in a civil action for any act or omission done in compliance with this  
11 section.

12           (4) Consent is not required before undertaking the autopsy required  
13 under this section.