

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5545

As Reported by House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to fees for certified copies of vital records.

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).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 4/22/03 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Increases the vital records fee by \$4.00 (from \$13.00 to \$17.00) for every copy of a birth, marriage, divorce, and death certificate issued at both the Center for Health Statistics and by local health jurisdictions (LHJs).
- Increases the vital records fee by \$9.00 (from \$8.00 to \$17.00) for second copies of death certificates issued at LHJs; the Department of Health will use \$7.00 of the increase to develop and maintain the state's vital record systems, including the creation of a web-based electronic death registration system.
- Provides \$2.00 of each \$17.00 fee to be transferred to the Department of Health to support operation and maintenance of the existing statewide vital records system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Clements, Cody, Conway, Cox, DeBolt, Dunshee, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McIntire, Miloscia, Pflug, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt, Buck and McDonald.

Staff: Amy Hanson (786-7118).

Background:

The Department of Health's (Department) Center for Health Statistics (CHS) has maintained the state's system of vital records and statistics since 1907. Certified copies of birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates can be obtained from the CHS or local health jurisdictions. Since initiation of the state's Automated Birth Certificate system in 1992, approximately 85 percent of all certificates have been issued locally.

The current fee for a certified copy of a birth certificate is \$13.00 a copy. Certified copies of death certificates cost \$13.00 for the first copy and \$8.00 for each additional copy that is ordered at the same time as the first copy. Of the current fee, \$5.00 is dedicated to the Death Investigations Account for purposes that include funding of the state toxicology laboratory, county autopsy costs, and the state forensic investigations council, among other things. The balance of the fee is retained by the agency issuing the certificate. Locally collected fees are not shared with the Department to support operation and maintenance of the statewide repository.

In 2002 the Legislature directed the Department to study the feasibility of implementing an electronic death registration system. In January 2003, the Department issued a report recommending the creation of such a system in 2005. A fee increase for certified copies of vital records was also recommended to fund the project.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The state and local fee for all certified copies of birth and death certificates is raised to \$17.00. All fees paid locally stay with the local health jurisdiction, except as follows: 1) \$5.00 of each fee for birth certificates and death certificates is placed in the Death Investigations Account; 2) \$2.00 of each fee is transferred to the Department to support operation and maintenance of the statewide vital records system; and 3) \$7.00 of each fee for additional copies of death certificates ordered at the same time as the first copy goes to the Department to maintain the state vital records system, including the implementation of a web-based electronic death registration system.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The amended bill allows local registrars to collect an additional fee for payment for vital record fees by credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, stored value card, federal wire, and automated clearinghouse system, or other means of electronic communication.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The electronic death registration system will replace a very labor intensive and time-consuming paper process.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Patty Hayes, Department of Health.