

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1578

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: Representatives Haigh, Cairnes, Gombosky, Benson, Fromhold, Rockefeller, Lantz, Anderson and Alexander; by request of Department of Health.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/18/03, 2/20/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the vital records fee by \$2.00 (from \$13.00 to \$15.00) 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 \$7.00 (from \$8.00 to \$15.00) for second copies of death certificates issued at LHJs; the Department of Health will use this revenue to develop and maintain the state's vital records system, including the creation of a web-based electronic death registration system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Buck, Clements, Cody, Conway, Cox, Dunshee, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Miloscia, Pflug, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Staff: Amy Hanson (786-7118).

Background:

The Department of Health's (DOH) 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 (LHJs).

The current fee for a certified copy of a vital record is \$13.00 per copy, except that additional copies of a death certificate ordered at the same time as the first copy are \$8.00 per 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. For locally collected fees, other than the \$5.00 of each fee that is placed in the Death Investigations Account, the remainder is retained by the LHJ that issued the certified copy.

In 2002 the Legislature required the DOH to study the feasibility of implementing an electronic death registration system. In January 2003, the DOH 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 Bill:

The state and local fee for all certified copies of vital records is raised to \$15.00. All fees paid locally stay with the LHJ, except as follows: (1) \$5.00 of each fee continues to be placed in the Death Investigations Account; and (2) \$7.00 of each fee for second copies of death certificates ordered at the same time as the first copy goes to the DOH to maintain the state vital records system, including the implementation of a web-based electronic death registration system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The principal purpose for the increase is to support the development of an electronic death registration system which will result in improved services to families, state and local government, and the funeral industry. The system fits into the DOH's digital government initiative. It is important for families to have access to death certificates quickly. This bill will speed up that process and lower overhead costs associated with the funeral that will more than offset the cost of the fee increase.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: TK Bentler and James Noel, Washington State Funeral Directors Association; and Mary Selecky, Department of Health.