



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Assembly Bill 662 Testimony
State Rep. John Nygren
February 3, 2016**

Thank you Chair Brooks and members of the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 662.

In the 2015-17 state budget bill, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) voted to prohibit a county from charging a funeral home, cemetery, or crematorium more than a certain amount for specified fees. This change is an effective safeguard that protects businesses that provide funeral, cemetery, and cremation services from being subject to unreasonably high fees that may be imposed by the county. Originally, coroner and medical examiner services were intended to be included in this provision. This bill is a technical fix to the budget bill and accomplishes the provision's original intent.

Additionally, this bill specifies if a county that has been providing coroner or lay medical examiner services begins providing physician medical examiner services under an intergovernmental cooperation agreement, the board may establish a fee.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before your committee today on this piece of legislation and welcome any questions you may have at this time.

February 3, 2016

Testimony on Assembly Bill 662

Senator Rob Cowles

Thank you, Chairman Brooks and Committee members for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 662. From changes in the 2015-17 biennial Budget, a county is now prohibited from charging a funeral home, cemetery, or crematorium more than a certain amount for specified fees from specified medical examiners or coroners. This change was intended as a protection for families and businesses that provide funeral or cremation services from increasing fees imposed on the services required for a deceased loved one.

This protection however, was intended to include fees rendered by both coroners and medical examiners, however the language passed in the budget only included fees from coroners. This bill is a technical fix to the budget bill and accomplishes the provision's original intent.

The bill and amendment further specifies that if a county that has been providing coroner or lay medical examiner services begins providing physician medical examiner services under an intergovernmental cooperation agreement, the board may increase only death certificate fees and cremation permits by \$100 each. This provision addresses counties that move toward a higher level of services, by moving from a coroner or lay medical to a licensed pathologist, covering multiple counties. Increasing those two fees would likely address the increased costs associated with moving to a much higher level of services without requiring the county to raise taxes.

This bill expands a moratorium on fee increases for certain fees charged by a county for coroner or medical examiner services so families will not be forced to pay increasing fees when a loved one passes

County Fees

As of 5/20/15

Fees are subject to change; always check with the county for current charges.

COUNTY	CREMATION		DISINTERMENT		DEATH CERTIFICATE	
	PERMIT FEE	Post Budget	FEE	Post Budget	FEE	Post Budget
ADAMS	\$110		\$25		\$90	
ASHLAND	\$100		\$50		\$75	
BARRON	\$150	\$220	\$50		\$125	\$150
BAYFIELD	\$75	\$100	\$50		\$0	
BROWN	\$150	\$280	\$50		\$35	
BUFFALO	\$125		\$50		\$30	
BURNETT	\$100		\$100		\$50	
CALUMET	\$75	\$160	\$75		\$0	
CHIPPEWA	\$125		\$125		\$125	
CLARK	\$125		\$45		\$25	
COLUMBIA	\$175	**	\$110		\$70	**
CRAWFORD	\$75		\$10		\$25	
DANE	\$285	\$350	\$0		\$0	
DODGE	\$175	\$225	\$100		\$50	
DOOR	\$150	\$280	\$50		\$35	
DOUGLAS	\$150		\$100		\$40	
DUNN	\$125		\$125		\$125	
EAU CLAIRE	\$150	\$250	\$50		\$100	\$250
FLORENCE	\$100		\$50		\$0	
FOND DU LAC	\$190	\$250	\$125		\$60	
FOREST	\$125		\$125		\$50	
GRANT	\$100		\$65		\$35	
GREEN	\$125	\$150	\$75		\$40	\$50
GREEN LAKE	\$150		\$100		\$0	\$50
IOWA	\$100		\$100		\$0	
IRON	\$75		\$0		\$100	
JACKSON	\$100	\$220	\$100		\$25	\$90
JEFFERSON	\$180	\$150	\$50		\$50	\$150
JUNEAU	\$110	\$275	\$80		\$125	
KENOSHA	\$225		\$55	\$85	\$35	
KEWAUNEE	\$150		\$50		\$85	\$100
LA CROSSE	\$150	\$100	\$125		\$85	
LAFAYETTE	\$80	\$100	\$0		\$0	
LANGLADE	\$75		\$60		\$0	
LINCOLN	\$100		\$75		\$75	
MANITOWOC	\$125		\$75		\$25	

County Fees

Fees are subject to change; always check with the county for current charges.

COUNTY	CREMATION PERMIT FEE		DISINTERMENT FEE		DEATH CERTIFICATE FEE	
		Post Budget		Post Budget		Post Budget
MARATHON	\$175	\$250	\$175	\$250	\$0	\$100
MARINETTE	\$100		\$50		\$50	
MARQUETTE	\$100		\$100		\$0	
MENOMINEE	\$75		\$0		\$0	
MILWAUKEE	\$350		\$50	\$150	\$150	
MONROE	\$100		\$100		\$100	
OCONTO	\$150	\$285	\$50		\$35	
ONEIDA	\$125		\$125		\$50	
OUTAGAMIE	\$150		\$100		\$50	
OZAUKEE	\$200		\$75		\$100	
PEPIN	\$100	**	\$100		\$0	**
PIERCE	\$150		\$25		\$0	
POLK	\$175		\$175		\$100	
PORTAGE	\$75		\$0		\$0	
PRICE	\$90	**	\$0		\$50	**
RACINE	\$135	\$200	\$60	\$75	\$60	\$75
RICHLAND	\$75		\$25		\$0	
ROCK	\$175	\$225	\$100		\$0	
RUSK	\$75		\$100		\$0	\$100
SAUK	\$125		\$0		\$0	
SAWYER	\$50		\$100		\$100	
SHAWANO	\$125		\$0		\$0	
SHEBOYGAN	\$150		\$100		\$100	
ST CROIX	\$150		\$200		\$100	
TAYLOR	\$75		\$0		\$0	
TREMPEALEAU	\$100		\$100		\$0	
VERNON	\$75	**	\$50		\$25	**
VILAS	\$75	\$125	\$75	\$125	\$0	\$50
WALWORTH	\$250		\$0		\$0	
WASHBURN	\$100		\$50		\$50	
WAHINGTON	\$200	\$240	\$70		\$70	\$100
WAUKESHA	\$215	\$240	\$65		\$75	\$80
WAUPACA	\$150	\$200	\$0		\$0	
WAUSHARA	\$125		\$100		\$75	
WINNEBAGO	\$150	\$200	\$50		\$0	
WOOD	\$85	\$100	\$85		\$0	\$100



division for vital records county/city fee comparison

NOTE: The Cremation column contains the fees that the county medical examiners charge. If you see that your county is blank, or that any of the information below is incorrect, please contact Amy at akleeman@mfd.org. Thank you in advance for your help.

County	1st Certified Copy	Additional Copies	Cremation	EDRS* Status	County	1st Certified Copy	Additional Copies	Cremation	EDRS* Status	County	1st Certified Copy	Additional Copies	Cremation	EDRS* Status
Alcona	\$12.00	\$5.00	\$20.00	A	Jackson	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A	Oceana	\$10.00	\$5.00		A
Alger	\$10.00	\$5.00		BU	Kalamazoo	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$11.00	A	Ogemaw	\$15.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A
Allegan	\$10.00	\$4.00	No Charge	A	Kalkaska	\$10.00	\$4.00	\$25.00	A	Ontonagon	\$10.00	\$5.00		BU
Alpena	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A	Kent	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$50.00	A	Osceola	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A
Antrim	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$25.00	A	Keweenaw	\$10.00	\$3.00	No Charge	BU	Oscoda	\$10.00	\$5.00		A
Arenac	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Lake	\$10.00	\$3.00	No Charge	A	Otsego	\$12.00	\$5.00		A
Baraga	\$7.00	\$3.00		BU	Lapeer	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$25.00	A	Ottawa	\$15.00	\$6.00	\$50.00	A
Barry	\$20.00	\$7.00	\$35.00	A	Leelanau	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Presque Isle	\$10.00	\$3.00		A
Bay	\$14.00	\$3.00	\$45.00	A	Lenawee	\$16.00	\$6.00	\$75.00	A	Roscommon	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$15.00	A
Benzie	\$7.00	\$3.00	\$40.00	A	Livingston	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$25.00	A	Saginaw	\$16.00	\$7.00	\$63.00	A
Berrien	\$13.00	\$4.00	No Charge	A	Luce	\$10.00	\$3.00		A	St. Clair	\$15.00	\$10.00	\$75.00	A
Branch	\$18.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Mackinac	\$10.00	\$5.00		BU	St. Joseph	\$13.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	A
Calhoun	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A	Macomb	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$79.00	A	Sanilac	\$20.00	\$10.00	\$45.00	A
Cass	\$13.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	East Pointe	\$15.00	\$5.00			Schoolcraft	\$10.00	\$3.00		BU
Charlevoix	\$8.00	\$3.00	\$15.00	A	St. Clair Shores	\$15.00	\$7.50		A	Shiawassee	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$25.00	A
Cheboygan	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$10.00	A	Sterling Heights	\$22.00	\$8.50		A	Tuscola	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$10.00	A
Chippewa	\$10.00	\$5.00		BU	Warren	\$7.50	\$3.00			Van Buren	\$13.00	\$4.00	\$25.00	A
Clare	\$15.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Manistee	\$13.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Washtenaw	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A
Clinton	\$13.00	\$5.00	\$10.00	A	Marquette	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	BU	Wayne (County)	\$22.00	\$7.00	\$75.00	I
Crawford	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$25.00	A	Mason	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A	Allen Park	\$15.00	\$5.00		A
Delta	\$10.00	\$4.00		BU	Mecosta	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$20.00	A	Dearborn	\$20.00	\$5.00		A
Dickinson	\$15.00	\$10.00		BU	Menominee	\$10.00	\$3.00		BU	Dearborn Hts.	\$15.00	\$5.00		A
Eaton	\$12.00	\$5.00	\$35.00	A	Midland	\$14.00	\$6.00	No Charge	A	Detroit	\$22.00	\$7.00	\$75.00	
Emmet	\$15.00	\$5.00		A	Missaukee	\$10.00	\$3.00	No Charge	A	Garden City	\$15.00	\$5.00		A
Genesee	\$25.00	\$10.00	\$40.00	A	Monroe	\$12.00	\$5.00	\$30.00	A	Grosse Pointe	\$17.00	\$5.00		
Gladwin	\$15.00	\$8.00	No Charge	A	Montcalm	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$45.00	A	Grosse Pte. Farms	\$17.00	\$5.00		
Gogebic	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$75.00	BU	Montmorency	\$10.00	\$5.00		A	Lincoln Park	\$20.00	\$10.00		
Grand Traverse	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	A	Muskegon	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$55.00	A	Livonia	\$15.00	\$5.00		A
Gratiot	\$26.00	\$12.00	\$50.00	A	Newaygo	\$13.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Riverview	\$18.00	\$7.00		A
Hillsdale	\$15.00	\$5.00		A	Oakland	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$40.00	I	Taylor	\$15.00	\$5.00		
Houghton	\$10.00	\$3.00	No Charge	BU	Farmington Hills	\$15.00	\$5.00		A	Trenton	\$20.00	\$10.00		A
Huron	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$35.00	A	Madison Heights	\$15.00	\$5.00			Wayne (City)	\$15.00	\$5.00	\$75.00	
Ingham	\$20.00	\$10.00	\$26.00	A	Pontiac	(Files Oakland County)				Westland	\$18.00	\$6.00		
Ionia	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Rochester Hills	\$15.00	\$5.00			Wyandotte	\$20.00	\$10.00		
Iosco	\$10.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Royal Oak	\$15.00	\$5.00		A	Wexford	\$10.00	\$4.00	\$50.00	A
Iron	\$10.00	\$4.00		BU	Southfield	\$15.00	\$5.00							
Isabella	\$15.00	\$5.00	No Charge	A	Troy	\$15.00	\$5.00		A					

*Electronic Death Registration Status: A = Active; BU = Bringing Up; TNI = Trained/Not Implemented; I = Interested

Fall 2015 Michigan



WISCONSIN FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
GUIDING YOU FORWARD

Date: February 3, 2016

To: Members of the Urban and Local Affairs Committee

From: Adam Raschka, Executive Director, WI Funeral Directors Association

Re: Support of Assembly Bill 662

Chairman Brooks, members of the Urban and Local Affairs Committee, thank for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 662. My name is Adam Raschka and I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association. WFDA Board President, Kevin Apfel of Edgerton is joining me today. WFDA represents 350 locally owned funeral homes in Wisconsin.

Assembly Bill 662 closes a loophole created in the 2015-17 state budget which has been exploited by nearly one-third of Wisconsin counties to increase cremation permits and death certificate signing fees.

Wisconsin is an outlier in the Midwest when it comes to fees assessed upon grieving families. Current law requires a cremation permit be issued before anyone can be cremated in Wisconsin. This permit currently ranges in price from county to county between \$75 and \$350. By comparison, similar fees in Michigan range from \$0 to \$75. In Iowa the cremation permit fee is \$75 across the board and in Illinois the statewide fee is \$50. In Wisconsin, many counties go one step further and assess a "death certificate signing fee". In some counties it can cost up to \$250 for a coroner or medical examiner just to sign a death certificate.

The legislature took action in the budget to curb these fees by waiving the fees associated with low-income funerals. This practice, which was already successfully employed in Milwaukee, Racine and Marathon counties, was intended to be expanded statewide in the budget. In order to protect all families, a two-year freeze of fees for non-low income funerals was also adopted. This freeze is scheduled to sunset after two years and will allow for indexing of fees moving forward.

In the past these fees have grown dramatically. For example, in 2013 in Barron County a cremation permit cost \$100 and a death certificate signing fee was \$25. In just two years these fees increased to \$150 and \$125, a combined 120% increase. Barron County has gone even further since they discovered a loophole in the budget provision that has allowed counties with Medical Examiners to ignore the two-year freeze. A cremation permit today in Barron County now costs \$220 and \$150 for a death certificate signing fee for a combined total of \$370. This is a \$245 dollar increase in the Barron County death tax since 2013.

Since the budget passed, at least 25 counties have increased their fees. Eau Claire County has doubled their combined fees from \$250 to \$500. Juneau County has increased their cremation permit fee 150% to \$275. Rusk, Marathon, and Wood counties have implemented a new \$100 a death certificate fee. This is a death tax families were not paying one year ago. Twenty-one counties have yet to impose a death certificate signing fee.

Assembly Bill 662 closes the loophole which exempts counties with a medical examiner from abiding from the fee freeze in the budget. In the end, it is grief-stricken families which pay these fees. The WFDA asks that you support this legislation which protects the families we serve.

Wrongful cremation suit: Lawsuit against medical examiner names town

🕒 Published: Wednesday, 03 June 2015 11:18

✍️ Written by Susanna Sheehan

📄 Hits: 2263



The estate of a woman who was mistakenly cremated in Duxbury last year is suing the state medical examiner and has named the town as a party to the lawsuit. According to Duxbury's town counsel Arthur Kreiger of Anderson and Kreiger, LLP, the town has been named in the lawsuit the Estate of Frances Hickey v. Officer of the Chief Medical Examiner, et al that is currently in discovery at Suffolk Superior court.

Last year, a funeral parlor delivered a casket to the town's crematory on Mayflower Street with all the correct paperwork provided by the state's medical examiner and the body was cremated, said Department of Public Works director Peter Buttkus, who oversees the cemetery department.

However, it turns out the wrong person was cremated. Buttkus said that he has learned that there were two deceased people with the last name of Hickey, one male and one female, and due to an alleged mix up of paperwork by the state medical examiner, the wrong person was sent to Duxbury to be cremated.

"Once a case comes into the crematory with all the proper paperwork the body is never viewed and it goes into the retort," said Buttkus. "So unfortunately the woman was cremated and her estate didn't want her cremated."

"It was a cremation of the wrong body, which did happen, but the town believes it is not at fault," said Kreiger. "A medical examiner has to provide certain proper documentation. The allegations are that the proper documentation wasn't sent."

The law firm of Pierce Davis is handling this case but Kreiger's firm is involved because the town has been named as well.

Discussion of this case was part of an update on litigation that Kreiger provided the Board of Selectmen Monday night. The Board met in a closed door session before its regularly scheduled meeting to discuss three pending cases: CALM Golf v. Duxbury, Duxbury v Robert Troy and Johnson Golf Management Inc. v Duxbury and a potential case against the town involving the Eriksons of Lakeshore Drive. Kreiger didn't comment on these cases.

Kreiger also noted that he is keeping on top of a case regarding a town employee who was hit on the head with a wooden palette during an accident at the transfer station. There is no claim against the town. The case is Cook v Masciarelli Wine Company and it is being heard at the Norfolk Superior Court.



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A Journal Sentinel Watchdog Update

Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association, insurer to settle trust account claims

By Cary Spivak of the Journal Sentinel
Aug. 5, 2014

The Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association will pay \$20,000 and its insurance company will kick in another \$650,000 to settle civil securities fraud charges brought against it for its mishandling of a trust fund that held the proceeds of prepaid funerals, according to documents filed in court Tuesday.

State regulators will drop the civil charges of fraud and deceit, misrepresentation and illegally selling of unregistered securities that were filed when they discovered the association's trust account had a shortfall of more than \$21.5 million. The association, which has 330 members, and its trust fund were placed into receivership in 2012 after state regulators compared the fund to a Ponzi scheme. Money that was supposed to be invested in conservative vehicles was actually being funneled into risky ventures, such as highly leveraged hedge funds, derivatives and private equity deals. The association was in receivership for a brief time. The fund remains in receivership.

The securities were being sold by funeral directors and the proceeds held to cover expenses for more than 10,000 burials. Today, about 8,000 people have money in the trust. At one point the shortfall exceeded \$24million, a figure that has since dropped to about \$15 million, records show. The fund has recovered \$11.75 million.

The fund and individual funeral directors are covering the costs of prepaid funerals. Funeral homes are paying 40% of the costs, although they hope to recoup some of that money from the trust fund.

The settlement calls for the funeral directors trade group to pay \$10,000 to the Wisconsin Funeral Trust and \$10,000 to the state Department of Financial Institutions. Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Co. will pay \$650,000 to the trust to resolve the claim brought by John Wirth, the court appointed receiver. Wirth charged the trade group with negligence for the manner in which it handled the fund.

"Negotiations had some challenges because of the potential defenses that the insurance company had," Wirth said.

George Althoff, spokesman for the Department of Financial Institutions which filed charges against the association along with the state Department of Justice, said the agreement "is a positive outcome for

thousands of consumers who invested in the Wisconsin Funeral Trust."

The settlement, which must be approved by Dane County Judge Peter Anderson, also bans the funeral directors association from selling securities; acting as a broker or making "false, misleading or deceptive statements to the public regarding the sale of pre-need funeral arrangements."

Neither the association nor any other party to the agreement "admits any misconduct or wrongdoing," the settlement states.

The settlement also calls for the funeral directors association not to seek the return of \$110,114 of association money that Wirth used in 2012 to cover some trust fund expenses.

Technically, the association could have gone after the money, said Christopher Stroebel, the association's attorney. But, he added, "we'd be crazy to do that."

The agreement does not affect a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission probe into the aggressive money-management strategies used by the trust fund when it was managed by Madison money managers Michael and Patrick Hull. The Hull brothers have said they did nothing wrong and were investing funds as directed by the association.

Facebook: <fb.me/cary.spivak>

Twitter: <twitter.com/cspivak>

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/wisconsin-funeral-directors-association-insurer-to-settle-trust-account-claims-b99324391z1-270005531.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

Milwaukee County

Dear ladies and gentlemen of the assembly and senate:

I am Dr. Brian Peterson, Chief Medical Examiner of Milwaukee County since 2010. I have been a practicing Forensic Pathologist since the late 80's and have practiced on both coasts and in the Midwest, as a Naval officer and as a civilian, in private practice and now as an employee of county government. As a professional in the field of death investigation I am proud of my office and staff; we investigate over 6000 deaths and perform some 1000 autopsies annually for Milwaukee County and another 400 autopsies for surrounding counties and the state. We have the only office in the state accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners, the only forensic pathology fellowship (training) program, and our own accredited toxicology laboratory. Paying for all of this can be a struggle, but by our own efforts, including "outside" autopsies, medicolegal consultation work, and fees, we manage to offset almost half the annual funding required to keep our office operating.

This critical work would be seriously undermined by Assembly Bill 662, which I respectfully urge you to vote against.

Deceased individuals deserve dignified care; they most certainly also deserve justice. Time and time again, in coroner and medical examiner offices across the country, we have seen that funding cutbacks and shortages lead inevitably to shortcuts. Deaths go uninvestigated, and autopsies are not done. Diminished work leads to inadequate information for law enforcement, public health, and next of kin. Truly, in communities facing increased homicides, opiate and other drug abuse, allegations of "cover up" and the like, more quality death investigation is needed, not less.

We understand that the times are austere and expenses must necessarily be controlled and limited. Ultimately though, in the sensitive world of death investigation, quality simply cannot and should not be sacrificed. Our deceased deserve no less.

Please vote no on assembly Bill 662.

Cordially,

Brian L. Peterson, M.D.

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BRIAN L. PETERSON, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

Office of the Medical Examiner

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February 2, 2016

To Members of the Assembly & Senate:

It is disheartening and disappointing to think that a private sector, for-profit agency has any authority in dictating how county government runs its offices or manages its budget. I have never heard of a private sector business being this involved in the policies of a governmental agency. It truly is unprecedented. The WFDA has no knowledge or basis to draw from to offer a roadmap to the legislature on how a forensic office is operated and what our budgetary requirements are. Each county, based on population and geographic location, have their own unique budgetary priorities.

The effects of Act 55 have been detrimental, if not devastating thus far. This hastily written expansion legislation makes it even more difficult. To expect coroner/medical examiner offices to not only waive fees, but then put a freeze and cap on future increases will paralyze services to the public that we serve. County coroner's/medical examiners who are already strapped, will be faced with decisions that will impede how deaths are investigated and weaken the system having a negative effect on the public and the services we provide. Difficult decisions such as cutting back on necessary autopsies, and consequently justice for the decedent and family? Or, do we cut back on staff, and consequently jeopardize the quality of the overall death investigation? Do we cut back on services provided to the local funeral homes and families in regards to cremation permit authorization? Although the list is endless, none of the listed scenarios will maintain or improve the services we provide the public.

Where does it end? If we allow one public entity to dictate our budgets and department management, how many other private sector entities will weigh in? How many cuts is one department expected to make? Who do you think will ultimately pay the price? Not the coroner/medical examiner. . . .but the well-intentioned tax payers of each and every one of those counties!!!!

In regards to the exception for counties involved in intergovernmental agency agreements. . . It is unrealistic and unethical. Of our 72 counties, only 10 have a physician medical examiner. These counties are the minority. These counties tend to be larger, and more populated . . . therefore having a larger tax levy to support their needs. Why not give the 62 counties who do not have a physician medical examiner an exemption?

Right now, as we stand . . . the glaring discrepancy between counties is in the training or lack thereof for coroners/medical examiners, not the fees associated with the services that we provide. Instead of dwelling on the nominal fees associated with the services that coroners/medical examiners provide, lets focus on the quality of services we provide.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jennifer Schroeter

Jennifer Schroeter, MS, D-ABMDI
Chief Deputy Medical Examiner
WCMEA President



*Office of the
Dane County Medical Examiner*

Dr. Vincent Tranchida,
Chief Medical Examiner



Dear ladies and gentlemen of the assembly.

Thank you for having me come to speak to you.

I am Dr. Vincent Tranchida. I am a physician, with a specialty in Forensic Pathology. I have been the Chief Medical Examiner for Dane County since January 1st of 2011, and I am also the current Chief Medical Examiner of Rock, Brown, Door, and Oconto counties. My office also performs forensic autopsies for 12 other counties in the state as well.

My work revolves around the field of death investigation, and has been so for over a decade now.

I strongly urge you to vote against Assembly Bill 662.

Coroners and Medical Examiners' offices have an important role in the community.

Death investigation by these offices is one of the last watchtowers to catch communicable disease, criminal activity, identity fraud, or neglect and abuse in care facilities.

This is a critical function in the state.

The cremation viewings, external examinations, autopsies, and laboratory tests that these offices perform are each county's last safeguard to maintain the safety of its populace.

With this work, we are able to determine whether or not a decedent has died from natural or unnatural causes, and subsequently support the efforts of other agencies, such as public health, law enforcement, and the district attorney's office.

This work, however, does not come without a cost.

By determining why and how people in the county die, each county is best able to dedicate its resources and attentions towards life-saving efforts. While this use of a county department benefits the family of the decedent, it also benefits the community at large as well. As such, the determination of fees for service needs to be dictated by the individual county government, rather than the end user.

By restricting the amount that a county can charge for its fees for use of a county agency, the bill unfairly restricts the county's ability to adequately support its coroner

Room 2144, Public Safety Building • 115 W. Doty Street • Madison, Wisconsin 53703





*Office of the
Dane County Medical Examiner*

Dr. Vincent Tranchida,
Chief Medical Examiner



and medical examiners offices. This will, ultimately, result in a decreased ability for these offices to continue providing critical services.

This may mean fewer, or less detailed viewings prior to cremation and destruction of the body. Investigations of nursing home and hospice neglect and abuse will fall by the wayside. Certainly, investigators will no longer be able to travel to individual funeral homes for the convenience of directors and families.

Fewer autopsies and less laboratory testing will mean more "buried homicides", undiagnosed illness outbreaks, and less of an ability for our law enforcement and district attorney's office to fight back against the flood of heroin and other drugs in our communities.

The bill has long-reaching implications, and these implications are quite worrisome for the future of forensic work in the State of Wisconsin. Do we really want to step backwards, to open ourselves up to accusations of shoddy, poorly-funded mishandling of cases?

We all know that every dollar counts, and controlling expenses is an important part of government. I would be happy to be part of any future discussion about ways to control costs as it relates to the medical examiners and coroners' office. This is not the way to do it.

Please vote no on assembly Bill 662.

Thank you for your time.

