


MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Special Committee on the Powers and Duties of Coroners and Medical Examiners

FROM: Jayme Sellen, Legislative Associate 

DATE: September 14, 2005

RE: Special Committee on the Powers and Duties of Coroners and Medical Examiners

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) would like to thank the Legislative Council for convening the Special Committee on the Powers and Duties of Coroners and Medical Examiners. As you all know, county coroners and medical examiners are charged with the responsibility of investigating deaths. A survey performed in 2004 showed Wisconsin had 43 counties that have an elected county coroner, while the remaining counties employ a medical examiner. Approximately 80 percent of these positions are considered part-time. Their backgrounds range from emergency medical technicians or nurses to law enforcement officers or fire fighters.

WCA would like to see this study Committee investigate some of the concerns we have regarding coroners and medical examiners.

- What is the most effective and efficient manner to investigate deaths? Should a coroner or medical examiner be on site for all deaths or only suspicious deaths? Deaths that occur under the care of a physician or of hospice care do not warrant a death investigation.
- Should coroners and medical examiner's offices be consolidated or regionalized to save tax dollars and lessen the burden on counties while maintaining the same quality of service? Does every county need a coroner or medical examiner or can these duties be regionalized or even performed by the state.

In this time of levy limits and the public outcry regarding property taxes, creating new and innovative ways to lessen the burden on counties and ultimately the county property taxpayer is needed to address the high cost of government in Wisconsin. Death investigation is one area where consolidation would save money and keep the same standards of service.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please call me if you have any questions.