

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Representative Bob Herron

Official Business



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

House Bill 301 – Autopsies and Death Certificates

“An Act relating to duties and procedures of the state medical examiner and the Department of Health and Social Services; and relating to death certificates.”

Version 28-LS1196\Y;
Staff Contact: Liz Clement 465-6576

SECTIONAL SUMMARY

Section 1 amends AS 12.65.025 (a) (2) to reinforce the State Medical Examiner's (ME's) current ability to ship remains to the deceased's family in cases where the place of death is not the decedent or family's home, up to the cost equivalent of shipment to the place of death. *This family-friendly change allows the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to focus solely on the cost of required transport, paying toward the shipment only up to the cost of transport to the place of death, even though the body is being shipped to the family's actual location. The family would then pay any difference in cost. This would never increase DHSS costs; in some cases it would reduce costs, while also being more responsive to the needs of grieving families.*

Clarifies AS 12.65.025 (a) (3) to prevent misinterpretation and complication to families. *In some rare instances, air carriers have told families that State law requires embalming of their loved ones' remains prior to accepting the body for shipment. This change clarifies the state's reference to embalming, which has been previously but is not currently required.*

Section 2 adds new requirements to existing AS 12.65.025.

New (f) requires the ME's office to utilize existing technology readily available in many rural health facilities. The Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS) has made substantial investments in quality telemedicine technology that could be used for the benefit of locals and DHSS. *This adds flexibility to the law to allow initial conversations considering a potential pilot project, to be defined through organizational Memoranda of Understanding or Agreement, in which DHSS and ATHS organizations could partner to allow the ME to perform some preliminary*

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distance examinations at a village clinic or larger regional hub facility prior to determining whether or not the body must be brought into Anchorage for further evaluation. Each case that could be closed without shipping the body into Anchorage represents money saved for the State, stress minimized for grieving families.

New (g) outlines standards of fair written communication between the ME's office and surviving family members. *This will help to ensure fair and accurate information enables families to make informed choices that align with their cultures and their budgets.*

Sections 3 and 4 add to existing AS 18.50 a new subsection (e), memorializing in statute the ME's current practice of obtaining the Burial Transit Permit for remains they will send directly back to the family. *This addition will ensure current good practice continues; grieving families should never be expected to navigate this piece of the process on their own.*