

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2014 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 161
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SB161CS(FIN)-DHSS-SMEO-03-05-14
Title: AUTOPSIES AND DEATH CERTIFICATES
Sponsor: OLSON
Requester: Senate Finance Committee

Department: Department of Health and Social Services
Appropriation: Public Health
Allocation: State Medical Examiner
OMB Component Number: 293

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2015 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2015 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2015	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues							
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2015) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Updated to reflect changes in blank CS version "U" (3/4/14). Deletes the requirement for embalming because of a carrier's policy. Removes Sec. 2 (h) requirement for temperature control, and all of Sec. 3 and Sec. 4 related to death certificates. Sec. 2 (f) adds requirements that the facility is verified by the Medical Examiner as adequate and meets national standards. The department has revised its interpretation of Sec. 2 (f) on remote post mortem examinations to assume that any costs for the state facility would be borne by the remote facility. Based on these changes, the fiscal note has been revised to zero.

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Division:	Public Health	Date:	03/05/2014 12:00 PM
Approved By:	Sarah Woods, Deputy Director, Finance & Management Services	Date:	03/05/14
Agency:	Health & Social Services		

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSSB161(FIN)

Analysis

This bill requires the State Medical Examiner's Office to provide written notice describing the duties and procedures of the State Medical Examiner's Office to the person responsible for the burial of the deceased; and to obtain a burial-transit permit before transporting the body. The State Medical Examiner's Office is required to transport the deceased to a location other than the location nearest the location of death after examination if requested by the family and if the costs do not exceed that of shipping the body back to the community nearest the location of death. If the costs are higher for the alternate location and the family maintains the request, the family would be responsible for paying the difference in the cost. The average cost to transport a body to the Medical Examiner's Office and back is approximately \$700. There are no costs associated with implementing these provisions as this is the current practice of the State Medical Examiner's Office.

The bill requires the State Medical Examiner's Office to perform any embalming required by law. Currently, there are no laws requiring embalming for transport within Alaska. Therefore, there is no fiscal impact under current circumstances.

This bill requires the Medical Examiner's Office to provide the necessary cosmetology if the deceased were disfigured by the post mortem examination. The State Medical Examiner's Office currently follows this policy; however they contract with funeral homes to provide this service. There are no funeral homes located in rural Alaska and it is unknown who, if anyone, could alternatively provide this service or the cost of providing this service.

The bill requires the State Medical Examiner's Office to designate a location for conducting a post mortem examination that is in the community closest to where the death occurred if a facility with adequate technology and personnel is available at the location to enable the state medical examiner to direct a remote examination. Post mortem examinations conducted remotely via telemedicine equipment between a local provider and the State Medical Examiner's Office could only occur after the State Medical Examiner verified that the facility has adequate and trained staffing; and appropriate technology, equipment, policies, procedures and physical plant in place. The remote facility must meet standards of the National Association of Medical Examiners. Under current procedures, there are only certain cases that could be completed remotely – accidents and possible natural causes for unattended deaths. All presumed suicides and homicides would still be sent to the Medical Examiner in Anchorage. Those that were remotely examined and found to possibly be homicide or suicide would need to be sent to the Medical Examiner. The remainder would still be sent to the Medical Examiner's Office for additional testing and exam. The Medical Examiner's Office ships about 400 cases each year to a location other than the community nearest the location of death. Of those, 40 were accidental or presumed natural causes that could have been done remotely, at an estimated cost of \$1,500 per case at the location.

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital is the only other location in the state, aside from the State Medical Examiner's Office in Anchorage, that is currently equipped to perform forensic examinations. Neither the State Medical Examiner's Office nor the Fairbanks location currently has telemedicine/video conferencing equipment, and additional investments would be required. The one-time cost to purchase and install the necessary technology at the Medical Examiner's Office is \$5,000. If a physician were performing these duties on behalf of the State it is unknown who would be liable if the state was ever questioned about the autopsy results. It is also unknown if the state would be responsible for providing liability coverage in these cases. The department understands that a pilot program has been proposed whereby a remote facility would bear the cost of all the necessary equipment, training, and other infrastructure, including the technology for the Medical Examiner's Office, in order to perform remote examinations for a limited number of select cases. Under this assumption, this provision would not have a fiscal impact to the state.