

**S B**

**145**

WALTER J. HICKEL  
GOVERNOR



P. O. Box 110001  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001  
(907) 465-3500

STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
JUNEAU

*June 8, 1993*

*The Honorable Steve Rieger  
Alaska State Senator  
Chair, Senate Health, Education,  
and Social Services Committee  
716 West Fourth Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501*

*Dear Steve,*

*I am pleased to inform you that the legislation sponsored by the Senate Health, Education, and Social Services Committee, Senate Bill No. 145, relating to the position of the State Medical Examiner, was signed into law on June 3, 1993. The chapter reference is Chapter 47, SLA 1993, and the effective date is September 1, 1993.*

*With best regards.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wally".

*Walter J. Hickel  
Governor*

# Alaska State Legislature

Senator Steve Rieger, Chair  
Senator Bert Sharp, Vice Chair  
Senator Loren Leman  
Senator Mike Miller  
Senator Jim Duncan  
Senator Johnny Ellis  
Senator Judith Salo



State Capitol  
Room 516  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 465 3762

## Senate Committee on Health, Education and Social Services

### Sponsor Statement on:

### **SB 145 "An Act establishing the position of state medical examiner; and relating to preparation of death certificates."**

Senate Bill 145 is a Senate HESS bill which has the support of the Departments of Public Safety and Health and Social Services and the Alaska Court System. Currently, a coroner determines whether post mortem examinations are necessary, physicians conduct the post mortem examinations under a fee for service arrangement, and the Department of Health and Social Services pays for the exams and associated costs.

Senate Bill 145 creates a new position of state medical examiner in the Department of Health and Social Services. It provides that coroners may request the state medical examiner, under regulations to be adopted by the department, to conduct an external and/or internal examination of the body and to take other appropriate actions to determine the cause of death and to certify it.

It is the expectation of the Committee that a state medical examiner will be able to reduce the total number of post mortem exams performed by eliminating unnecessary exams. In the FY 94 Senate Health and Social Services budget, the Senate Finance Committee has incorporated the passage of SB 145 into its funding proposal and shows a reduced post mortem examination cost when compared to the governor's budget proposal.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill No. SB 145

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Affected: Alaska Court System  
 Title: An Act establishing the position of State BRU: Trial Courts  
medical examiner Components: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sponsor: Senate HESS  
 Requestor: \_\_\_\_\_ COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 768

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS & CLAIMS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE						
FUND SOURCE:						

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 FEDERAL RECEIPTS						
1003 GF MATCH						
1004 GF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1005 GF/PROGRAM RECEIPTS						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
OTHER						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year (FY 93) impact: None

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)  
No fiscal impact.

Prepared by: C. S. Christensen III, Staff Counsel *CSC* Phone: 264-8228  
 Division: Alaska Court System Date: 03/11/93

Approved by: Arthur H. Snowden, II, Administrative Director *AS*  
 Agency: Alaska Court System Date: 03/11/93

Distribution (by preparer): Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor, OMB, & Impacted Agency(ies).

## POSITION PAPER

SENATE BILL NO. 145

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act establishing the position of state medical examiner; and relating to preparation of death certificates."

SB 145 establishes the position of state medical examiner within the Department of Health and Social Services. It provides that coroners may request the state medical examiner, under regulations to be adopted by the department, to conduct an external and/or internal examination of the body and to take other appropriate actions to determine the cause of death and to certify it.

### BACKGROUND

The existing system for the medical investigation of deaths required to be reported to coroners in Alaska involves four agencies: the Departments of Public Safety, Health and Social Services and Law, and the Alaska Court System.

AS 12.65 specifies the types of deaths which must be reported to coroners and gives coroners the responsibility for establishing the cause of death in these cases. In some of these reported cases, a physician is willing to certify the cause of death and the coroner may determine that no further action is required. In other cases, a physician is not willing to certify the cause or the circumstances of death are such that the coroner may decide to require a post mortem examination which, under current conditions, usually includes an autopsy. Physicians who conduct post mortem examinations work under a fee for service arrangement. Coroners certify that the physician's service has been rendered and DHSS pays the bills. In addition to physician fees, there are also costs for laboratory services, ground or air transportation of bodies for examination and fees payable to funeral homes for the use of facilities and other services provided. The Department of Public Safety provides facilities and support for certain post mortem examinations conducted at its Anchorage Crime Lab facility .

Historically, the costs of the program for medical investigations of death have been significantly underfunded. Supplementals or revised budget requests have been required each year.

# POSITION PAPER

STATE OF ALASKA ★ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

	<u>Orig Auth</u>	<u>RP/SUPP</u>	<u>Final Auth</u>	<u>Actuals</u>
FY88	463.4	180.6	644.0	618.3
FY89	463.4	333.2	796.6	767.3
FY90	463.4	310.0	773.4	754.5
FY91	463.4	346.6	810.0	809.1
FY92	696.0	102.0	798.0	796.2
FY93	696.0	229.6 (Req)		

The marked projected increase in FY93 is accounted for by an estimated 11 percent increase in the number of autopsies performed and a higher cost per unit of service.

Also historically, Alaska has had a higher rate of autopsy examinations than other states. Contributory factors include the relatively young age of the population and the high incidence of violent deaths, both accidental and deliberate.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this bill is to control escalating costs through improving the decision making process for selection of cases to be autopsied. The only way to make significant changes in the rate of cost increases is to limit the number of autopsies and associated transportation expenditures. However, it is absolutely essential that these changes be achieved while simultaneously guaranteeing that autopsies and other types of post mortem examinations be performed where they are necessary for the purposes of law enforcement and public health.

It is anticipated that the number of autopsies can be reduced by focusing on deaths which are classified as accidental or natural. In FY 1991, Alaska autopsied 84 percent of the accidental and 22 percent of the natural death cases reported while the national average for these two categories is 50 percent and 11 percent respectively. In FY 1992, 538 or 68.7 percent of autopsies performed related to accidental or natural deaths at a cost of \$546.6.

There are two critical cost-related issues which can be addressed by a state medical examiner:

- 1) which cases require full autopsies or other post mortem examinations, including toxicology screens; and
- 2) whether transportation of a body is necessary, and if so, to what destination. E.g., can the drawing of body fluids for toxicology screens be done locally or at a regional facility rather than in Anchorage?

The state medical examiner will provide consultation to the coroners and law enforcement agencies on forensic medical considerations in death scene investigations, on

# POSITION PAPER

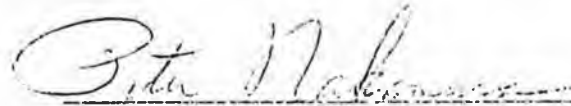
STATE OF ALASKA ★ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

interpretation of decedents' medical histories, and on the interpretation of the findings of external body examinations. He or she will also perform about 125 autopsies per year while other required autopsies will continue to be done by contract pathologists. A quality control program will also be established. The state medical examiner will also provide training and monitoring of the work of physicians who are appointed as medical examiners in the judicial districts. Once these activities are in place and functioning, it should be possible to contain the costs of the program.

## POSITION

The Department of Health and Social Services strongly endorses SB 145. Discussions have been held with the Court System and the Departments of Law and Public Safety over a period of years to try to arrive at a realistic cost containment strategy. While the Court System has attempted to limit the proportion of cases sent for autopsy examination, significant changes have not occurred. We believe that the establishment of a state medical examiner program will ensure that appropriate post mortem examinations are performed when necessary for reasons of public safety or public health, while also providing the department with the tools it needs to control escalating program costs.

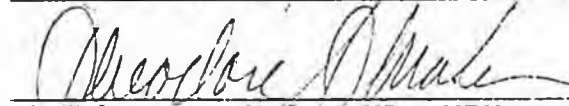
Recommended by:

  
Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH  
Director, Division of Public Health

Date:

March 10, 1993

Approved by:

  
Theodore A. Mala, MD, MPH  
Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services

Date:

10 March 1993

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. Senate Bill 145

Revision Date: 3/31/93 Dept. Affected: Health and Social Services  
 Title: Establish a state medical examiner position BRU: State Health Services  
and preparation of death certificates Component: Post Mortem Examinations  
 Sponsor: SHES  
 Requestor: SCRA COMPONENT SERIAL NO. #293

**Expenditures/Revenues:**

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99
PERSONAL SERVICES	191.0	191.0	191.0	191.0	191.0	191.0
TRAVEL	25.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0
CONTRACTUAL	183.0	183.0	183.0	183.0	183.0	183.0
SUPPLIES	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
EQUIPMENT	25.0					
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>429.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE						
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**FUNDING:**

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	429.0	394.0	394.0	394.0	394.0	394.0
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>429.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>	<b>394.0</b>

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME	2	2	2	2	2	2
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year (FY93) impact: None

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Line 100 -  
 Medical Examiner rg 27 Exempt Anch PFT 155.4  
 Clerk IV rg 9 GGU Anch PFT 35.6

Line 200 -  
 Recruitment & Moving Expenses 10.0  
 Travel to conduct PME's & meeting 15.0

Prepared by: Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH Phone: (907) 465-3090  
 Division: Division of Public Health Date: 3/31/93

Approved by Commissioner: Theodore A. Mala, MD, MPH Date: 3/31/93  
 Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

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## ANALYSIS (cont.):

Line 300 -	
Post Mortem Examinations(500 x \$1098/ea) + 24 hr. backup	549.0
(This includes the \$396.0 currently authorized for the component)	
Toxicology Panels (100 x \$250/each)	25.0
Office Space & Phones	5.0
Line 400 -	
Office & Lab Supplies	5.0
Line 500 -	
Office Furniture	7.5
Computer Equipment	17.5

The number of autopsies is anticipated to reach 824 in FY93, an 3% increase over FY92. The projected increase in the number of autopsies is due in part to increases in the population, the age of the population and the number of violent crimes in the state. Under the current coroner's system, the courts are responsible for securing a completed death certificate. If the death involves an unattended death where the coroner cannot locate a physician who is willing to attest to the probable cause of death or a death associated with a criminal offense, the coroner orders an autopsy. The Department of Health & Social Services is responsible for paying for these costs. By implementing a State Medical Examiner system, the authority to perform or order an autopsy would rest with the agency also responsible for the budget.

The anticipated cost containment will occur when the ME can make the decision that he/she can attest to the probable cause of death based on (1) the information that is available, or (2) toxicology panels, or (3) by performing an autopsy. In FY91, Alaska autopsied 84% of the accidental and 22% of natural cause deaths while the national average for these two categories is 50% and 11% respectively. In FY92, 538 or 68.7% of autopsies performed related to accidental or natural deaths. The average cost of an autopsy for that fiscal year was \$1,016; \$546.6 was spent on those two categories in FY92. By implementing an ME system, the agency is hoping to reduce the number of autopsies performed after accidental and natural deaths, which will bring Alaska's autopsy ratios for those two categories down comparably.

One of the difficulties that this state experiences (that other states do not) is lack of access in the rural areas. A professional person on staff who can train Public Safety Officers and Village Public Safety Officers in death scene investigations and Public Health Nurses and EMT's in body fluid draws will help contain the costs of shipping bodies to Anchorage.

An ME can perform 100-125 autopsies a year along with other administrative duties and court appearances. The agency will have to continue to contract with other pathologists in order to perform the additional autopsies which the ME determines are necessary and to provide a 24 hour back-up system. Assuming 824 deaths as the base, 110 autopsies will be performed by the ME, 150 deaths certificates can be filed based on the death investigation alone, and 100@\$250/test can be filed based on a toxicology panel. The remaining 500 autopsies will need to be contracted out.

With the unit cost per autopsy going from \$1,017 to \$1,098 with implementation of a new fee schedule for the funeral homes and with the number of autopsies expected to increase, this bill will give the department the tools it needs to control the increasing costs of this program.

Position Title State Medical Examiner		No. of Positions 1	Range/Step 27A	Bargaining Unit Exempt
Time Status PFT	Staff Months 12.0	Location Anchorage		Election District
TYPE of EXPENDITURE		AMOUNT		
Salary		124.2		
Benefits		31.5		
Premium Pay				
Other				
Total Personal Services		155.7		
Travel		25.0		
Contractual		3.5		
Commodities		4.4		
Equipment		16.4		
Other				
Total Cost		205.0		
FUNDING SOURCE for TOTAL COST				
1002	Federal Receipts			
1003	GF Match			
1004	General Fund	205.0		
1005	GF/Program Receipts			
1006	GF/Mental Health Trust			
1007	I/A Receipts			
1061	CIP Receipts			
Other				
<p>Justification</p> <p>This position is responsible for the design and implement a statewide system for the investigation of deaths under SB145.</p> <p>The incumbent will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) design a system for medico-legal investigation of unanticipated, sudden, or violent deaths in order to provide accurate, legally defensible determinations of the manner and cause of these deaths;</li> <li>2) serve as chief technical and managerial officer of the forensic medical system;</li> <li>3) perform approximately 125 autopsies per year and maintain quality control for 600-700 autopsies or other postmortem examinations which are performed by contract pathologists; and</li> <li>4) design and train trainers of personnel involved in death investigation including local physicians, state and local police, village public safety officers, etc.</li> </ol> <p>This position is being requested as an exempt position in order to be more competitive with the rest of the United States in recruiting candidates.</p>				

**REQUEST for  
NEW POSITION**

AGENCY: Health and Social Services  
 BRU: State Health Services  
 COMPONENT: Post Mortem Examinations

**FY94**

Page 1 of 1  
 Revised Date:

Position Title Clerk IV		No. of Positions 1	Range/Step 9A	Bargaining Unit GGU
Time Status PFT	Staff Months 12.0	Location Anchorage		Election District
<b>TYPE of EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>AMOUNT</b>		
Salary		25.4		
Benefits		10.2		
Premium Pay				
Other				
<b>Total Personal Services</b>		<b>35.6</b>		
Travel				
Contractual		1.5		
Commodities		0.6		
Equipment		8.2		
Other				
<b>Total Cost</b>		<b>45.9</b>		
<b>FUNDING SOURCE for TOTAL COST</b>				
1002	Federal Receipts			
1003	GF Match			
1004	General Fund	45.9		
1005	GF/Program Receipts			
1006	GF/Mental Health Trust			
1007	I/A Receipts			
1061	CIP Receipts			
Other				
Justification This position will be the sole clerical support for the State Medical Examiner position. It will be responsible for: 1) office management; 2) data base management; 3) office fiscal responsibilities; and 4) medical transcriptions.				

**REQUEST for  
NEW POSITION**

AGENCY: Health and Social Services  
 BRU: State Health Services  
 COMPONENT: Post Mortem Examinations

**FY94**

Page 1 of 1  
 Revised Date:

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

### DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110610  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0610  
PHONE: (907) 465-3090

March 30, 1993

Honorable Steve Rieger  
Room 516  
State Capital

Dear Senator Rieger:

The department projects the following costs associated with the Post Mortem Program for FY 94. Our latest projections anticipate that the program will have to pay for 824 post mortem exams in FY 94. This new projection is down from our original projection of 880 as a result of more current data. We have prepared an amended fiscal note based upon this new projection. Our analysis is also based upon an average cost of \$1,098.00 per post mortem examination. This average was discussed in the original fiscal note and is still our best estimate of actual costs after all fee increases have been realized in the system.

Table one shows the projected cost of 824 post mortem exams under the existing system is \$905,000. This compares with \$825,000 if SB 145 passes and a State Medical Examiner (ME) is hired.

TABLE 1

	Without Medical Examiner	With Medical Examiner
Personal Services		\$191.0
Travel		\$ 25.0
Contractual		
post mortem exams(824@\$1,098)	\$905.0	
post mortem exams(500@\$1,098)		\$549.0
Toxicological panels(100@\$250)		\$ 25.0
Office and phones		\$ 5.0
Supplies		\$ 5.0
Equipment		\$ 25.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Estimated Cost	\$905.00	\$825.00
Estimated Savings With Medical Examiner		\$80.0

This first year savings of approximately \$80,000 occurs because the ME is expected to do 110 autopsies per year along with other administrative duties and court appearances. The analysis further assumes that approximately 150 deaths will be certified based upon

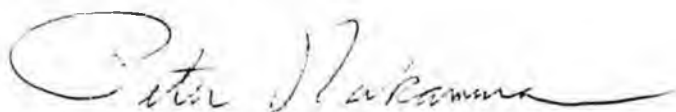
Senator Reiger

-2-

a death investigation alone and 100 can be certified on the basis of a toxicology panel alone at a cost of \$250.

Savings in future years will depend primarily upon the rate of increase in the cost of contracted services. However, with the proposed Medical Examiner system in place these services will be under the administrative and financial control of the Department.

Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Peter M. Nakamura". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Peter M. Nakamura MD, MPH  
Director

**BILL NO:** SB 145

**DATE:** March 18, 1993

**TITLE:** "An Act establishing the position of state medical examiner. . ."

**CONTACT:** C.E. Swackhammer  
Deputy Commissioner  
465-4322

SB 145 establishes the position of state medical examiner within the Department of Health and Social Services. It provides that coroners may request the state medical examiner, under regulations to be adopted by the Department, to conduct an external and/or internal examination of the body and to take other appropriate actions to determine the cause of death and to certify it.

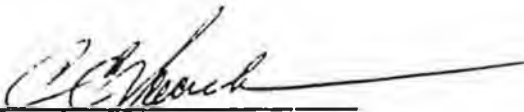
Since 1988, DPS autopsy costs have escalated from 0 to \$225.0 projected for FY93. A state medical examiner can assist in helping to reduce the growth of these costs by being the central point of contact to coroners and law enforcement agencies on forensic medical considerations in death scene investigations, on interpretation of decedents' medical histories, on the interpretation of the findings of external examinations so that a decision can be made to determine:

Which cases require full autopsies or other post mortem examinations and including toxicology screens;

Whether the transportation of the body for post mortem examination is necessary; and if so to what location can autopsy/toxicology screens be performed.

A state medical examiner program will help ensure that appropriate post mortem examinations are performed when necessary for reasons of public safety or public health, while also providing the department with a mechanism to help contain growth in autopsy costs. A state medical examiner will also establish a quality control program to provide training and monitoring of the work of physicians who are appointed as medical examiners in the judicial districts.

The Department of Public Safety strongly endorses SB 145.

  
Richard L. Burton  
Commissioner

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO: SB 145

Revision Date: 4/2/93 Dept. Affected: Public Safety  
 Title: "An act establishing the position of state medical examiner." BRU: DPS Statewide Support  
 Sponsor: Senate HESS Component: Laboratory Services  
 Requestor: Senate STA COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 527

**EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars) (inflation not included)**

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>CAPITAL</b>						
<b>REVENUE FUND SOURCE:</b>						

**FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)**

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other						
<b>TOTAL</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

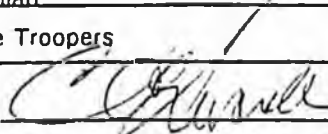
**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year (FY 93) impact: \$ 0.0

**ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)**

The Department's original fiscal note was in error, due to miscommunication. Passage of this bill will help to contain the growing costs for services provided by the Crime Lab. See attached budget amendment.

Prepared By: Francis C. Allan Phone: 269-5691  
 Division: Alaska State Troopers Date: 4/02/93  
 Approved by Commissioner:  Date: 4/02/93  
 Agency: Richard I. Burton, Dept. of Public Safety

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BUDGET AMENDMENT DESCRIPTION: Laboratory Service Autopsy Support  
 (Limit to 98 Characters)

AGENCY CONTACT/PHONE NUMBER: George M. Taft, Jr. Director 289-5687

DESCRIBE WHAT THIS AMENDMENT CHANGES FROM THE GOVERNOR'S ORIGINAL BUDGET SUBMISSION, WHY IT IS NECESSARY AND THE CONSEQUENCES IF THE AMENDMENT IS NOT APPROVED:

General funds are requested to keep pace with forensic evidence processing and autopsies referred by coroners for examination.

Funds are requested to permit filling of all currently authorized crime lab positions and establish one additional autopsy assistant position.

Personal Services  
 Funding is requested to reduce the Personal Services Underfunding to two percent (2%) and add one (1) additional Autopsy Assistant.

FY 94 Budget PACS Underfunding	5.83%	\$98,245	
less OMB minimum Vacancy	2.00%	(33,725)	
<b>Reduce Personal Services Underfunding</b>		<b>64,520</b>	<b>64.5</b>
<b>Additional Autopsy Assistant</b>			<b>44.4</b>
			<b>108.9</b>

Funding is requested in Non Personal Services for forensic and Autopsy Support due to the significant impact on the basic functions of the Crime Lab.

The State Crime Laboratory has been substantially impacted by the shift in the number of autopsies referred to the crime lab by coroners. The number of autopsies performed have increased from 10 in FY 88 to a projected 600 in FY 93.

CODE	EXPENDITURE BY OBJECT	GOV ORIG	AMEND	GOV AMEND
100	Personal Services	1,588.0	108.9	1,696.9
200	Travel	64.5	2.0	66.5
300	Contractual Services	297.5	25.0	322.5
400	Supplies	150.9	15.0	165.9
500	Equipment	2.0	20.0	22.0
600	Land, Buildings, Etc.			
700	Grants, Claims, Etc.			
800	Miscellaneous			
TOTAL		2,102.9	170.9	2,273.8
I-A Transfer (NON-ADD)				
1002	Federal Receipts			
1003	General Fund Match			
1004	General Fund	2,051.6	170.9	2,222.5
1005	GF/Program Receipts			
1007	I-A Receipts	51.3		51.3
	Other			
POSITION INFORMATION				
		PFT	27	1
		PPT/SEAS		28
		Non Permanent		

**GBA** GOVERNOR'S BUDGET  
 AMENDMENT

AGENCY Department of Public Safety  
 BRU DPS Statewide Support  
 COMPONENT Laboratory Services  
 DBR (BEARS) COMPONENT SERIAL # 527

FY 94

Page 1 of 2  
 Revised Date

AS 12.65.025 assigns the responsibility for designating facilities at which autopsies are performed to the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services. AS 12.65.040 authorizes the coroner to inquire into the cause of death. The Department of Public Safety's Crime Laboratory receives bodies for autopsy but has no authority to question or screen referrals from the coroner. Additionally, the Crime Laboratory has never been permanently funded to perform or assist in a significant number of autopsies.

Due to the tremendous growth in the number of autopsies, resources including forensic professionals are being diverted to assist in autopsies to such an extent that approximately 10% of the Lab's resources are now allocated to autopsy work.

The resulting impact limits the major forensic focus of the lab which is to provide forensic support to police in the processing of cases involving latent fingerprints (21,500), criminalistics (6,900), narcotics (11,000), crime scene investigations, administering the breath alcohol program and perform drawings and facial reconstructions.

During the first 6 months of FY 93, 301 autopsies were performed at the Public Safety Crime Laboratory. Of the total \$2,000.5 authorized, an estimated \$225.2 was spent for autopsy support. With the expectation of handling over 600 bodies during FY 93, the Laboratory cannot handle this volume of work with only two autopsy assistants or afford the overtime to receive these remains after hours. During FY 93, other Laboratory caseload has increased to a level where current laboratory personnel can no longer handle this increased workload.

GBA

ADDITIONAL  
EXPLANATION  
FORM

AGENCY Department of Public Safety

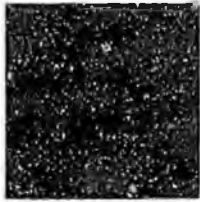
BRU DPS Statewide Support

COMPONENT Laboratory Services

FY 94

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Revised Date



# LASKA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508-5334 • (907) 562-2662

RECEIVED MAR 31 1993

March 30, 1993

Senator Steve Reiger  
Alaska State Senate  
State Capitol  
Interdepartmental Mall Stop: 3100  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Reiger:

The Legislative Affairs Committee of the Alaska State Medical Association recently reviewed Senate Bill 145 regarding the position of a State Medical Examiner. After a lengthy discussion we feel it necessary to oppose this bill. It will not represent an improvement over the current system. It was also felt that this would be a more expensive means of dealing with unattended deaths in Alaska. I would encourage you to oppose this bill. If you have any questions regarding this, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Donald R. Lehmann, M.D., A.B.F.P.  
Chairman, Legislative Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Medical Association

DRL:bj

