

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1181

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, March 30, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to the powers and funding of the forensic investigations council.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the powers and funding of the forensic investigations council.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Ericks, O'Brien, Lovick, Ormsby, McDonald, Haler and Wallace.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/14/07, 83-13.

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 3/27/07, 3/30/07 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Murray, Roach and Weinstein.

**Staff:** Lidia Mori (786-7755)

**Background:** The Washington State Forensic Investigations Council is a 12 member committee appointed by the Governor to oversee death investigations as part of the state's criminal justice system. The Council authorizes expenditures from the Council's Death Investigations Account for the purpose of assisting local jurisdictions in the investigation of multiple deaths involving unanticipated, extraordinary, and catastrophic events, or involving multiple jurisdictions. The Council also oversees the Washington State Patrol Bureau of Forensic Laboratory Services and prepares and approves the Bureau's budget prior to submission to the Office of Financial Management.

The Bureau provides a wide range of forensic science expertise to city, county, and state law enforcement officers, assisting agencies at crime scenes, preparing evidence for trial, and providing expert testimony. The Bureau coordinates the efforts of the State's Breath Alcohol Test Program, Drug Evaluation and Classification Program, six crime laboratories, the Latent Print Laboratory, and the State Toxicology Laboratory. The Department of Health's Center for Health Statistics has maintained the state's system of vital records and statistics since 1907. The term "vital record" includes all records of birth certificates, death certificates, fetal certificates, marriage certificates, dissolutions, annulments, and legal separations. The Department of Health is required by statute to charge a \$17 fee for certified copies of vital records and \$8 for a search of files when no copy is made. Certified copies of vital records can also be obtained.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

A portion of each fee collected is paid to the Department of Health for the purpose of maintaining the state vital records system. In addition, \$5 of each current fee imposed is dedicated to the Death Investigations Account for the purpose of funding the state toxicology laboratory, county autopsy costs, and the state forensic investigations council, among other things.

**Summary of Bill:** Washington State Forensic Investigations Council may spend a maximum of \$25,000 per biennium from the Death Investigations Account for the purpose of assisting local jurisdictions in need of securing forensic anthropology services or other testing to determine the identity of human remains. The Council must adopt rules for the purpose of authorizing this expenditure. The state and local fee for all certified copies of vital records is increased to \$20. Of the current fee imposed, the portion dedicated to the Death Investigations Account is increased to \$8 of each fee imposed for the issuance of a certified copy of a vital record.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill is critically important to small jurisdictions. It is very important for them to be able to do a top notch job of investigating multiple death crimes. This bill will stabilize funding.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Ericks, prime sponsor; Dr. Barry Logan, Director, Bureau of Forensic Services; Debbie Wilke, Washington Association of Counties.