

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1794

As Passed House:
March 6, 2017

Title: An act relating to the death investigations account.

Brief Description: Concerning the death investigations account.

Sponsors: Representatives Klippert and Jinkins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/9/17, 2/15/17 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/17, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Forensic Investigations Council to spend from the Death Investigations Account in order to fund a statewide case management system for coroners and medical examiners.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Taylor.

Staff: Rachelle Harris (786-7137).

Background:

Death Investigations Account.

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.

The Death Investigations Account (DIA) is an appropriated account that funds various activities related to investigations of deaths in the state. The DIA is funded with revenues from a fee charged by the Department of Health and local registrars for providing certified copies of various records such as birth and death certificates, marriage and divorce records, and others. Moneys in the DIA are appropriated to the following:

- the Toxicology Laboratory;
- the counties for the cost of performing autopsies;
- the Washington State Patrol for the state dental identification system;
- the Criminal Justice Training Commission for training county coroners, medical examiners, and their staff; and
- the Forensic Investigations Council.

Forensic Investigations Council.

The Forensic Investigations Council (FIC) is a 13-member council responsible for oversight of the Bureau of Forensic Laboratory Services. The council's members are selected from a variety of county, city, and state officials and are appointed by the Governor. In addition to other duties, the FIC is permitted to authorize various expenditures from the DIA, including the following:

- up to \$250,000 per biennium for assisting local jurisdictions in the investigation of multiple deaths involving unanticipated or extraordinary events, or involving multiple jurisdictions; and
- up to \$25,000 per biennium for assisting local jurisdictions in securing forensic anthropology services or other testing in order to identify human remains.

Summary of Bill:

The FIC may authorize expenditures from the DIA for the purpose of funding a statewide case management system for coroners and medical examiners.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The search for an effective statewide case management system for coroners and medical examiners has been ongoing since about 2002. The current system is very expensive for counties. A new system has been developed and the vendor has agreed to provide the system to the state. The Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners will train counties on the use of the system. It provides expanded information access for prosecutors and law enforcement. The money is already available in the DIA; this bill will simply allow the FIC to authorize the expenditure for it. The United States Department of Justice operates servers that host the data, and related records will get archived in the Washington State Archives.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; and Dan Blasdel, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.