

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1794

As of April 1, 2017

Title: An act relating to the death investigations account.

Brief Description: Concerning the death investigations account.

Sponsors: Representatives Klippert and Jinkins.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/17, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 3/28/17, 3/29/17 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/31/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; O'Ban, Vice Chair; Pedersen, Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Darneille, Frock and Wilson.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Travis Sugarman (786-7446)

Background: 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. Monies in the DIA are appropriated to the following:

- the Toxicology Laboratory;
- the counties for the cost of performing autopsies;

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- 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 (FIC).

The 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.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Law & Justice): PRO: This will help interstate cooperation because Idaho and Oregon are using compatible systems. It also greatly aids cooperation between offices within the state. Office accreditation requires use of a case management system. The cost includes all 39 counties, so the cost is actually quite low. This will help coroners and medical examiners coordinate with local prosecutors. The system will be compliant with the needs of the archives.

Persons Testifying (Law & Justice): PRO: Representative Brad Klippert, Prime Sponsor; Dr. Timothy Davidson, WACME; Dan Blasdel, WA Association of Coroners.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Law & Justice): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This provides funding to coroners offices to allow for a death investigations database. This is a great bill.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Greg Sandstrom, Kitsap County Coroner.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.