

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5612

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As of February 10, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to the death investigations account.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the death investigations account.

**Sponsors:** Senators Padden and Pedersen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 2/09/17.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Authorizes spending from the death investigation account to fund a statewide case management system for coroners and medical examiners.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Staff:** Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

**Background:** The Forensic Investigations Council (Council) is composed of law enforcement personnel and pathologists. The Council reviews, recommends, and promotes improvements to the criminal justice and death investigation systems in Washington State. In conjunction with the University of Washington, the Council monitors the operations of the State Toxicology Laboratory and manages a State Forensic Pathology Fellowship Program. In addition, the Council reviews and monitors the budgets of the State Toxicology Laboratory and the Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory, and appoints the State Toxicologist. The Council also studies and recommends cost-efficient improvements to the death investigation system in Washington and reports its findings to the Legislature.

Among the Council's powers are the ability to:

- authorize the expenditures of up to \$250,000 per biennium from the Council's death investigations account appropriation for the purpose of assisting local jurisdictions in the investigation of multiple deaths involving unanticipated, extraordinary, and catastrophic events, or involving multiple jurisdictions; and
- authorize the expenditure of up to \$25,000 per biennium from the Council's death investigations account appropriation for the purpose of assisting local jurisdictions to

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secure forensic anthropology services or other testing, to determine the identity of human remains upon a showing of financial need.

**Summary of Bill:** The Council may authorize expenditures from the death investigations account to establish a statewide case management system for coroners and medical examiners. The Council must confer with the state association of coroners and medical examiners in the selection of the system.

**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:** PRO: This is the result of a three-year study. It will assist coroners significantly in case management. It will allow coroners to coordinate with those in other states that use the same system. It would have made the Oso disaster easier to conduct and coordinate.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Mike Shaw, Washington Association of County Officials.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.