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Memorandum

February 21, 2020

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Juliann Jenson, Research Analyst, 303-866-3264

SUBJECT: Abuse of Corpse Crimes in Other States

Summary

This memorandum addresses abuse of corpse laws in the 50 states. While the vast majority of states have enacted abuse of corpse or other related laws, they differ in definition and crime classification. For example, some states outline penalties for mutilating or defacing a corpse, while others more broadly define it as “outraging family sensibilities.” Over half of the states (29) have classified this crime as a felony instead of a misdemeanor.

Table 1 provides more detailed information on state definitions and crime classifications for abuse of corpse laws. The state survey attempted to narrow the search to those laws regarding corpse mutilation or a similar-type abuse or desecration. Two states (Maryland and Vermont) do not appear to have an explicit or applicable abuse of corpse law on the books.

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**Table 1
State Abuse of Corpse Laws**

State	Abuse of Corpse Laws	Crime Classification	Citation
Alabama	Knowingly treats a human corpse in a way that would outrage ordinary family sensibilities	Class C Felony	Ala. Code § 13A-11-13
Alaska	Intentionally disinters, removes, conceals, or mutilates a corpse	Class A Misdemeanor	Alaska Stat. § 11.61.130
Arizona	Mutilates a dead human body	Class 4 Felony	Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-1364
Arkansas	Knowingly disinters, removes, dissects, or mutilates a corpse; or physically mistreats or conceals a corpse in a manner offensive to a person or reasonable sensibilities	Class D Felony	Ark. Code § 5-60-101
California	Willfully mutilates, disinters, or removes from the place of internment, or commits an act of sexual penetration	Felony	Cal. HSC § 7052
Colorado	Removes from the grave or other place of sepulcher without consent or treats the body or remains of any person in a way that would outrage normal family sensibilities	Class 2 Misdemeanor	Section 18-13-10, C.R.S.
Connecticut	Opens grave or removes corpse from place of sepulture without consent, or assists in surgical or anatomical experiments or dissections knowing it to be so removed	Class D Felony	Conn. Gen. Stat. § 946-53-334
Delaware	Treats a corpse in a way that a reasonable person knows would outrage ordinary family sensibilities	Class A Misdemeanor	Del. Code tit.2, § 1332
Florida	Mutilating, committing sexual abuse upon or otherwise grossly abusing a dead human body	Felony, second degree	Fla. Stat. § 872.06
Georgia	Willfully deface a dead body wherever it is located	Felony	Ga. Code Ann. § 31-21-44.1
Hawaii	Treats a human corpse in a way that the person knows would outrage ordinary family sensibilities	Misdemeanor	Haw. Rev. Stat § 711:1108
Idaho	Molesting in any way evidence of remains of a deceased human body	Misdemeanor	Idaho Code Ann. § 18-7027
Illinois	Engages in sexual conduct with a corpse or removes or carries away a corpse	Class 4 Felony	720 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 12-20.6
Indiana	Knowingly or intentionally mutilates a corpse	Level 6 Felony	Ind. Code § 35-45-11-2
Iowa	Mutilates, disfigures or dismembers a corpse with an intent to conceal a crime	Class D Felony	Iowa Code § 708.14
Kansas	Unlawful control of a dead human body or remains	Class A Nonperson Misdemeanor	Kan. Stat. Ann. § 21-6205
Kentucky	Intentionally treats a corpse in a way that would outrage ordinary family sensibilities	Class A Misdemeanor	Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 525.120
Louisiana	Mutilate any human remains without the authority to do so	Felony	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 8:654
Maine	Intentionally and unlawfully disinters, digs up, removes, conceals, mutilates, or destroys a human corpse	Class D Misdemeanor	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 17-A, § 21-508

**Table 1 (Cont.)
State Abuse of Corpse Laws**

State	Abuse of Corpse Laws	Crime Classification	Citation
Maryland	No law identified	-	-
Massachusetts	Willfully digs up, disinters, removes, or conveys away a human body or the remains thereof	Prison for not more than 3 years or jail for not more than 2.5 years	Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 272, § 71
Michigan	Disinterment, mutilation, or carrying away of human body	Felony	Mich. Comp. Laws § 750.160
Minnesota	Interference with dead body	Gross Misdemeanor	Minn. Stat. § 609.502
Mississippi	Desecration of a corpse	Felony	Miss. Code Ann. § 97-29-25
Missouri	Abandons, disposes, deserts, or leaves a corpse without properly notifying authorities	Class E Felony	Mo. Rev. Stat. § 194.425
Montana	Purposely touches, removes, or disturbs a corpse, its clothing, or anything near the corpse	Misdemeanor	Mont. Code Ann. § 44-3-404
Nebraska	Knowingly removing, abandoning, or concealing human skeletal remains	Class IV felony	Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1301
Nevada	Unauthorized dissection of a human body	Gross Misdemeanor	Nev. Rev. Stat. § 451.010
New Hampshire	Unlawfully removes, conceals, or destroys a corpse	Misdemeanor	N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 644:7
New Jersey	Unlawfully disturbs, moves, conceals, desecrates, damages, or destroys a corpse	Felony crime in the second degree	N.J. Rev. Stat. § 2C:22-1
New Mexico	Unlawfully disposes of, uses, or sells an unclaimed body	Felony in the fourth degree	N.M. Stat. § 24-12-3
New York	Unauthorized dissection of a human body	Class E Felony	N.Y. P.B.H. Law § 4210-a
North Carolina	Willfully disturbs, vandalizes, or desecrates human remains	Class 1 Felony	N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-401.22
North Dakota	Unauthorized dissection of a human body	Class B Misdemeanor	N.D. Health and Safety Code § 23-06-29
Ohio	Treats a corpse in a way that would outrage community and family sensibilities	Misdemeanor Second Degree	Ohio Rev. Code § 2927.01
Oklahoma	Desecration of a human corpse (includes altering)	Felony	Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21 § 47-1161.1
Oregon	Dismembers, mutilates, cuts, or strikes a corpse	Class B Felony	Or. Rev. Stat. § 166.087
Pennsylvania	Treats a corpse in a way that would outrage family sensibilities	Misdemeanor Second Degree	18 Pa. Crimes and Offenses Stat. § 5510
Rhode Island	Dissects or mutilates a dead body	Felony	R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-20-1.1
South Carolina	Destroys or damages the remains of a deceased human being	Felony	S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-600
South Dakota	Unauthorized dissection of a body	Class 1 Misdemeanor	S.D. Codified Laws § 34-26-13
Tennessee	Physically mistreats a corpse in a manner otherwise offensive to the sensitivities of an ordinary person; disinters a corpse; disposes of a corpse in violation of the law	Class E Felony	Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-312

**Table 1 (Cont.)
State Abuse of Corpse Laws**

State	Abuse of Corpse Laws	Crime Classification	Citation
Texas	Disinters, disturbs, damages, dissects, or treats a corpse in an offensive manner	Class A Misdemeanor	Texas Penal Code § 42.08
Utah	Abuse or desecration of a dead human body	Felony Third Degree	Utah Code § 76-9-704
Vermont	No law identified		
Virginia	Transports, secretes, conceals, or alters a dead body	Class 6 felony	Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-323.02
Washington	Removes, disturbs, molests, interferes, or knowingly conceals human remains	Gross Misdemeanor	Wash. Rev. Code § 68.50.050
West Virginia	Disturbs, disinters, or displaces a dead human body in a temporary or permanent burial place	Felony	W. Va. Code § 61-8-14
Wisconsin	Disfigures or dismembers a corpse with intent to conceal a crime or avoid apprehension	Class F Felony	Wis. Stat. § 940.11
Wyoming	Dissects or mutilates a dead human body	Felony	Wyo. Stat. § 6-4-502

Source: Legislative Council Staff.