



SB19-027 - Indigent Burial Options for Counties

Clarify in Statute that Cremation is an Option for Final Disposition of Indigents

Sponsors: Sens. Crowder and Winter, Rep. Valdez

Currently in Colorado, counties are responsible for paying the cost of burial for indigents. There are conflicting statutory references to this responsibility and some seem to indicate that cremation of the human remains is allowed. Others refer only to “burial” of unclaimed remains.

SB 27 amends the statute to expand the definition of “final disposition” to clarify that cremation is an option. Cremation is already an option for anatomical boards, which are responsible for the final disposition of remains when bodies are donated to science.

According to AARP, cremation surpassed traditional burial for the first time in history last year in the U.S. More people are choosing to be cremated instead of embalmed because cremation is cheaper, costing a third as much as a regular burial. It also saves natural resources, like land for burial plots and wood and steel for coffins.

In instances where the county coroner decides an indigent’s death was possibly the result of foul play or if the body is not identified, cremation would not be an option. Under the proposed legislation, if a family member was located, but was unable to pay for the burial costs, the county is still responsible for paying for the final disposition of the body – but could choose to cremate the remains.

This legislation acknowledges that cremation is now the most common form of final disposition. It would save taxpayer dollars and provide financial relief for rural counties with limited budgets.

Please Vote YES on SB 27

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