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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2009

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – FUNERAL DIRECTOR/EMBALMER  
FUNERAL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

Introduced By: Representatives Segal, Edwards, Sullivan, and Fierro

Date Introduced: February 04, 2009

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 5-33.2-24 of the General Laws in Chapter 5-33.2 entitled "Funeral  
2   Director/Embalmer Funeral Service Establishments" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **5-33.2-24. Proper authority for funeral arrangements and disposition of human**  
4   **remains.** -- Every licensed funeral director/embalmer, licensed funeral establishment, licensed  
5   crematory, and cemetery shall comply with the following rules with respect to proper authority  
6   for funeral arrangements and disposition of human remains:

7           (1) If a licensed funeral establishment is a party to a funeral services contract, as defined  
8   in section 5-33.1-2, for the benefit of a deceased person, only when executed by the principal,  
9   him or herself and the contract is still in effect at the time of that person's death, the terms of that  
10   contract shall control the nature of the funeral goods and services to be provided, the manner in  
11   which funeral services are to be conducted for the deceased, and the final disposition of the  
12   deceased person's remains to the full extent provided in that contract. When the contract is  
13   executed by the principal, him or herself, and specifies cremation as the chosen disposition, the  
14   contract is considered sufficient legal authorization for cremation. No licensed funeral  
15   establishment, licensed crematory, or cemetery nor any of its agents or employees, may cancel or  
16   materially alter any of the arrangements specified in that contract, even if requested to do so by a  
17   member of the deceased person's family or a funeral planning agent designated pursuant to  
18   chapter 33.3 of this title unless compliance with the terms of the original contract would result in

1 a violation of any applicable federal, state or local law or regulation, notwithstanding the  
2 provisions of this chapter.

3 (2) To the extent that there is no funeral services contract in effect at the time of death  
4 for the benefit of the deceased person, indicating the wishes of the deceased person with respect  
5 to the nature of the funeral goods and services to be provided, the manner in which funeral  
6 services are to be conducted, or the final disposition of the deceased person's remains, then the  
7 funeral establishment and its agents or employees shall follow the directions of the deceased  
8 person's survivors, in the following order of priority:

- 9 (i) An agent designated pursuant to chapter 33.3 of this title, if any;
- 10 (ii) The surviving spouse or domestic partner of the deceased;
- 11 (iii) The surviving adult children of the deceased;
- 12 (iv) The surviving parent(s) of the deceased;
- 13 (v) The surviving brother(s) or sister(s) of the deceased;
- 14 (vi) The surviving adult grandchildren of the deceased;
- 15 (vii) The surviving adult niece(s) or nephew(s) of the deceased;
- 16 (viii) The guardian of the person of the deceased at the time of his or her death.

17 (3) All licensed funeral directors/embalmers, licensed funeral establishments, licensed  
18 crematories, cemeteries, and all their agents and employees shall be held harmless, and shall not  
19 be subject to civil suit, either as individual(s), partnership(s), or corporation(s) for complying with  
20 the provisions of this chapter.

21 (4) For the purpose of this chapter, "domestic partner" shall be defined as a person who,  
22 prior to the decedent's death, was in an exclusive, intimate and committed relationship with the  
23 decedent, and who certifies by affidavit that their relationship met the following qualifications:

24 (i) Both partners were at least eighteen (18) years of age and were mentally competent to  
25 contract;

26 (ii) Neither partner is married to anyone else;

27 (iii) Partners were not related by blood to a degree which would prohibit marriage in the  
28 state of Rhode Island;

29 (iv) Partners resided together and had resided together for at least one year at the time of  
30 death; and

31 (v) Partners were financially interdependent as evidenced by at least two (2) of the  
32 following:

33 (A) Domestic partnership agreement or relationship contract;

34 (B) Joint mortgage or joint ownership of primary residence;

- 1           (C) Two (2) of the following:
- 2           (I) Joint ownership of motor vehicle;
- 3           (II) Joint checking account;
- 4           (III) Joint credit account;
- 5           (IV) Joint lease; and/or
- 6           (D) The domestic partner had been designated as a beneficiary for the decedent's will,
- 7           retirement contract or life insurance.

8           SECTION 2. Section 23-4-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 23-4 entitled "Office of

9           State Medical Examiners" is hereby amended to read as follows:

10           **23-4-10. Disposition of deceased bodies.** – (a) The office of state medical examiners

11           shall, after any postmortem examination or any autopsy, promptly release the deceased body to

12           the relatives ~~or~~, representatives or domestic partners of the deceased. The cost of transporting the

13           deceased body to a mortuary within the state of the relatives' or domestic partner's choice shall be

14           borne by the state if the autopsy was required to be performed as provided in this chapter. If there

15           are no known relatives ~~or~~, representatives or domestic partners, the office of state medical

16           examiners, after reasonable public notices, shall cause the body of the deceased person to be

17           buried. The general treasurer of the state shall have first priority in recovering the expenses of

18           burial from the estate of the deceased person.

19           (b) For the purpose of this chapter, "domestic partner" shall be defined as a person who,

20           prior to the decedent's death, was in an exclusive, intimate and committed relationship with the

21           decedent, and who certifies by affidavit that their relationship met the following qualifications:

22           (1) Both partners were at least eighteen (18) years of age and were mentally competent to

23           contract;

24           (2) Neither partner is married to anyone else;

25           (3) Partners were not related by blood to a degree which would prohibit marriage in the

26           state of Rhode Island;

27           (4) Partners resided together and had resided together for at least one year at the time of

28           death; and

29           (5) Partners were financially interdependent as evidenced by at least two (2) of the

30           following:

31           (i) Domestic partnership agreement or relationship contract;

32           (ii) Joint mortgage or joint ownership of primary residence;

33           (iii) Two (2) of the following:

34           (A) Joint ownership of motor vehicle;

- 1           (B) Joint checking account;
- 2           (C) Joint credit account;
- 3           (D) Joint lease; and/or
- 4           (iv) The domestic partner had been designated as a beneficiary for the decedent's will,
- 5 retirement contract or life insurance.
- 6           SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS – FUNERAL DIRECTOR/EMBALMER  
FUNERAL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

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- 1           This act would define "domestic partner" for the purpose of granting authority to
- 2 domestic partners of deceased for funeral arrangements of deceased.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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