



One Hundred First Legislature - First Session - 2009
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 671

Chairperson: Brad Ashford
Committee: Judiciary
Date of Hearing: March 11, 2009

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

In 2008, an interim study (LR 276) was conducted to examine the standards and oversight of death investigations in Nebraska.

The study included the following information:

1. Present-day autopsy rates in Nebraska;
2. Existing levels of coroner training;
3. Apparent quality of death investigations;
4. Existing state standards and oversight;
5. County rates of solved and unsolved death cases;
6. Current variance and effectiveness of death investigations in Nebraska's ninety-three counties;
7. Death investigation practices utilized in other states;
8. Identifying qualified physicians willing to assist with death investigations;
9. Proposed policies to improve Nebraska's medical examiner system; and
10. Other related matters.

The findings of this study revealed certain needs of key stakeholders in Nebraska's death investigation processes. The findings were included in a report and lead to the introduction of LB 671.

LB 671 provides our county coroners and law enforcement with the tools necessary to better accomplish their death investigation duties.

LB 671 amends sections 23-1212, 23-1213 and 23-1218 of the Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska by:

Modifying the membership of the Nebraska County Attorney Standards Advisory Council and charging them with the duty of ensuring statewide, quality and uniform death investigation processes.

LB 671 grants the council the authority to:

- Establish a region-based state medical examiner system.
- Make available certified forensic pathologists to serve as on-call consultants to law enforcement and county attorneys.
- Determine the duties of the medical examiners.
- Create and distribute uniform checklists of best practices.
- Promote uniform and quality death investigations for county coroners.
- Create standardized procedures for death investigations.
- Review death investigations and offer recommendations for improvement.
- Determine the number of hours required for coroner training.
- Distribute funds for coroner training.
- Serve as a facilitator to improve communication between all involved in death investigations.
- Assist with the establishment of a voluntary network of regional officials to serve as a support system during an investigation.

LB 671 creates the County Coroner Death Investigations Fund and funds it through a one dollar fee placed on all criminal proceedings, traffic infractions and misdemeanors filed in the courts of our state. This does not include juvenile court proceedings.

Principal Introducer:

_____ **Senator Pete Pirsch**