

**No. 151. An act relating to the removal of bodily remains.**

(H.281)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 5212b is amended to read:

§ 5212b. UNMARKED BURIAL SITES SPECIAL FUND; REPORTING OF  
UNMARKED BURIAL SITES

(a) The unmarked burial sites special fund is established in the state treasury for the purpose of protecting, preserving, moving or reintering human remains discovered in unmarked burial sites.

(b) The fund shall be comprised of any monies appropriated to the fund by the general assembly or received from any other source, private or public. Interest earned on the fund, and any balance remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year, shall be retained in the fund. This fund shall be maintained by the state treasurer, and shall be managed in accordance with subchapter 5 of chapter 7 of Title 32.

(c) The commissioner of economic, housing and community ~~affairs~~ development may authorize disbursements from the fund for use in any municipality in which human remains are discovered in unmarked burial sites in accordance with a process approved by the commissioner. The commissioner ~~shall~~ may approve any process developed through consensus or agreement of the interested parties, including the municipality, ~~the governor's advisory commission on Native American affairs~~ a Native American group

historically based in Vermont with a connection to the remains, and private property owners of private property on which there are known or likely to be unmarked burial sites, and any other appropriate interested parties, provided the commissioner determines that the process is likely to be effective, and includes all the following:

(1) Methods for determining the presence of unmarked burial sites, including archaeological surveys and assessments and other nonintrusive techniques.

(2) Methods for handling development and excavation on property on which it is known that there is or is likely to be one or more unmarked burial sites.

(3) Options for owners of property on which human remains in unmarked burial sites are discovered or determined to be located.

(4) Procedures for protecting, preserving or moving unmarked burial sites and human remains, subject, where applicable, to the permit requirement and penalties of this chapter.

(5) Procedures for resolving disputes.

(d) If unmarked burial sites and human remains are removed, consistent with the process set forth in this section and any permit required by this chapter, there shall be no criminal liability under 13 V.S.A. § 3761.

(e) The funds shall be used for the following purposes relating to unmarked burial sites:

(1) To monitor excavations.

(2) To protect, preserve, move, or reinter unmarked burial sites and human remains.

(3) To perform archaeological assessments and archaeological site or field investigations, including radar scanning and any other nonintrusive technology or technique designed to determine the presence of human remains.

(4) To provide mediation and other appropriate dispute resolution services.

(5) To acquire property or development rights, provided the commissioner of economic, housing and community affairs development determines that disbursements for this purpose will not unduly burden the fund, and further provided the commissioner shall expend funds for this purpose only with the concurrence of the secretary of commerce and community development and after consultation with the legislative bodies of any affected municipality or municipalities.

(6) Any other appropriate purpose determined by the commissioner to be consistent with the purposes of this fund.

(f) ~~The commissioner may adopt rules to carry out the intent and purpose of this section.~~ When an unmarked burial site is first discovered, the discovery

shall be reported immediately to a law enforcement agency. If, after completion of an investigation pursuant to section 5205 of this title, a law enforcement agency determines that the burial site does not constitute evidence of a crime, the law enforcement agency shall immediately notify the state archeologist who may authorize appropriate action regarding the unmarked burial site.

Sec. 2. UNMARKED BURIAL SITE TREATMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

(a) The unmarked burial site treatment plan committee is created to develop procedures for addressing issues relating to known or discovered unmarked burial sites of human remains, including developing treatment plans to be used when an unmarked burial site is discovered on private property. The committee shall be composed of the following nine members:

(1) The commissioner of economic, housing and community development or the commissioner's designee.

(2) The state archeologist or designee.

(3) A representative from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

(4) A representative from a Native American group based in Vermont who has experience in handling unmarked burial sites, appointed by the commissioner of economic, housing and community development.

(5) A federal archeologist from the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(6) The U.S. Forest Service, Green Mountain National Forest archeologist.

(7) The director of the University of Vermont consulting archeology program.

(8) A representative from the Vermont Bankers Association Inc.

(9) A representative from the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Vermont.

(b) The committee shall:

(1) Develop procedures for responding to reports of a discovery of an unmarked burial site. For the purposes of this section “an unmarked burial site” means the location of any interment of human remains, evidence of human remains, including the presence of red ochre, associated funerary objects, or a documented concentration of burial sites, but does not include a cemetery, mausoleum, or columbarium or any other site that is clearly marked as a site containing human remains.

(2) Develop various treatment plans for addressing issues that attend the discovery of an unmarked burial site on private property. A treatment plan is an outline of the process for providing appropriate and respectful treatment of the burial site while considering the rights of the landowner. Each treatment plan shall include the following as appropriate:

(A) Methods for determining the presence of an unmarked burial site, including archeological surveys and assessments and other nonintrusive techniques.

(B) Methods for handling development and excavation on property on which there is a known burial site or there is likely to be one.

(C) Options for owners of property on which human remains are discovered or known to be located.

(D) Procedures for protecting, preserving, or moving the burial site and the human remains.

(E) Time frames for implementation of the treatment plan.

(F) Procedures for resolving disputes among stakeholders.

(3) The committee shall issue a written report outlining the procedures and treatment plans to the house committee on general, housing and military affairs and the senate committee on economic development, housing and general affairs on or before January 15, 2011.

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 5212 is amended to read:

§ 5212. PERMIT TO REMOVE DEAD BODIES

(a) A person desirous of disinterring or removing the body of a human being from one cemetery to another cemetery or to another part of the same cemetery or from a tomb or receiving vault elsewhere shall apply to the ~~town~~

clerk of the ~~town where such~~ municipality in which the dead body is interred or entombed for a removal permit.

(b) An applicant for a removal permit shall publish notice of his or her intent to remove the remains. This notice shall be published for two successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the ~~town~~ municipality in which the body is interred or entombed. The notice shall include a statement that the spouse, child, parent ~~or~~, sibling, or descendant of the deceased, or that the cemetery commissioner or other municipal authority responsible for cemeteries in the municipality may object to the proposed removal by filing a complaint in the probate court of the district in which the body is located as provided in section 5212a of this title.

(c) The ~~town~~ municipal clerk shall issue a removal permit 45 days after the date on which notice was last published pursuant to subsection (b) of this section or, if an objection is made pursuant to section 5212a, upon order of the court.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a removal permit shall be issued upon application:

- (1) when removal is necessary because of temporary entombment; or
- (2) to a federal, state, county, or municipal official acting pursuant to official duties; or

(3) if the applicant has written permission to remove the remains from all persons entitled to object under section 5212a of this title.

(e) This section does not apply to:

(1) Unmarked burial sites that are subject to the provisions of subchapter 1 of this chapter.

(2) The removal of “historic remains,” which has the same meaning as in subdivision 5217(a)(1) of this title.

Sec. 4. 18 V.S.A. § 5217 is added to read:

§ 5217. REMOVAL OF MARKED HISTORIC REMAINS

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Historic remains” means remains of a human being who has been deceased for 100 years or more, and the remains are marked and located in a publicly known or marked burial ground or cemetery.

(2) “Public good” means actions that will benefit the municipality and the property where the remains are located.

(3) “Remains” means cremated human remains that are in a container or the bodily remains of a human being.

(4) “Removal” means to transport human remains from one location to another premises.

(b) A person may apply for a removal permit to disinter or remove historic remains by filing an application with the clerk for the municipality in which



the historic remains are located. The application shall include all the following:

(1) Identification of the specific location and marking of the remains.

(2) Identification of the specific location in which the remains will be reburied.

(3) The reasons for removal of the remains, including a statement of the public good that will result from the removal.

(c) An applicant for a removal permit shall send notice by first-class mail to all the following:

(1) The cemetery commissioner or other municipal authority responsible for cemeteries in the municipality in which the historic remains are located.

(2) All historical societies located within the municipality in which the historic remains are located.

(3) Any descendant known to the applicant. The applicant shall contact the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Old Cemetery Association, the Vermont Cemetery Association, and any veterans' organization operating within the county in which the historic remains are located in order to ascertain the whereabouts of any known descendants.

(4) The state archeologist.

(d) A cemetery commissioner or municipal authority responsible for cemeteries, a historical society, a descendant, or the state archeologist may file

an objection to the proposed removal of historic remains with the probate court in the district in which the historic remains are located and with the clerks of the municipality in which the historic remains are located within 30 days after the date the notice was mailed.

(e) If no objection is received within 30 days after the date the notice was last published as required by subsection (c) of this section, the municipal clerk shall issue a removal permit.

(f) If the probate court receives an objection within the 30-day period, the court shall notify the clerk for the municipality in which the historic remains are located and schedule a hearing on whether to allow removal as described in the application.

(g) The probate court, after hearing, shall order the municipal clerk to grant or deny a permit for removal of the historic remains. The court shall consider the impact of the removal on the public good.

(h) The permit shall require that all remains, markers, and relevant funeral-related materials associated with the burial site be removed, and the permit may require that the removal be conducted or supervised by a qualified professional archeologist in compliance with standard archeological process. All costs associated with the removal shall be paid by the applicant.

Sec. 5. 18 V.S.A. § 5201 is amended to read:

§ 5201. PERMITS; REMOVAL OF BODIES; CREMATION; WAITING  
PERIOD; INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCUMSTANCES OF  
DEATH

(a) Burial transfer permit. A dead body ~~of a person~~ shall not be buried, entombed, or removed ~~from a town~~, or otherwise disposed of, ~~except as hereinafter provided~~, without a burial-transit permit issued and signed by ~~the town~~ a municipal clerk, his or her a county clerk, or a deputy clerk for the municipality or unorganized town or gore in which the dead body is located; a funeral director licensed in Vermont; an owner or designated manager of a crematorium licensed in Vermont who is registered to perform removals; or a law enforcement officer.

(1) ~~The town clerk of the town or city~~ municipality shall provide for ~~registering deaths that occur in the town and for~~ issuing burial-transit permits ~~at a time when town~~ the clerks' offices are closed. ~~The town municipal clerk shall appoint annually, within five days after the clerk's election or appointment, one or more deputy registrars~~ deputies for this purpose; and record the name of the deputy or deputies appointed in the ~~town~~ municipal records and notify the commissioner of health of the names and residences of the deputy or deputies appointed.

(2) The county clerk of a county ~~wherein is situated~~ in which an unorganized town or gore is located shall perform the same duties and be subject to the same penalties as a ~~town~~ municipal clerk in respect to issuing burial-transit permits and registering deaths that occur in an unorganized town or gore within the county.

(3) A funeral director licensed in Vermont or an owner or designated manager of a crematory licensed in Vermont who is registered to perform removals may issue a burial-transit permit for any municipality or unorganized town or gore at any time, including during the normal business hours of a municipal clerk.

(4) After a ~~deputy or law enforcement officer~~ issues a burial-transit permit is issued, the ~~deputy or officer~~ person who issued the permit shall forward the death certificate or preliminary report and the record of the burial-transit permit ~~issued~~ to the clerk of the ~~town or city~~ municipality, or the clerk of the county, in the case of an unorganized town or gore, where death occurred on the first official working day thereafter.

(5) In cases of death by certain communicable diseases as defined by the ~~board~~ commissioner, the ~~town~~ municipal or county clerk, ~~his or her~~ a deputy registrar, a funeral director, a crematory owner or manager, or a law enforcement officer shall not issue a burial-transit permit except in accordance with instructions issued by the ~~local health officer or the board, which~~

~~instructions shall be kept on file by the town clerk. A licensed embalmer, funeral director or a funeral director's designee may transfer the body of a deceased person to another town for preparation for burial or cremation but the remains shall be returned to the town in which death occurred within forty-eight hours after such removal, unless a permit for permanent removal has been secured within such period. Such licensed embalmer, funeral director or designee shall leave, in writing, upon forms supplied by the commissioner, the name, address, license number of the embalmer or funeral director and the date and hour such body was delivered, with the institution from which or the person from whom any such body is received commissioner.~~

(6) A body for which a burial-transit permit has been secured, except one for the body of any person whose death occurred as a result of a communicable disease, as defined by the ~~board~~ commissioner, may be taken through or into another ~~town~~ municipality or unorganized town or gore for funeral services without additional permits from the local health officer or ~~board~~ the commissioner.

(b) No operator of a crematory facility shall cremate or allow the cremation of a dead body until the passage of at least 24 hours following the death of the decedent, as indicated on the death certificate, unless, if the decedent died from a virulent, communicable disease, a department of health rule or order requires the cremation to occur prior to the end of that period. If the attorney general or

a state's attorney requests the delay of a cremation based upon a reasonable belief that the cause of death might have been due to other than accidental or natural causes, the cremation of a dead human body shall be delayed, based upon such request, a sufficient time to permit a civil or criminal investigation into the circumstances that caused or contributed to the death.

(c) The person in charge of the body shall not release for cremation the body of a person who died in Vermont until the person in charge has received a certificate from the chief, regional, or assistant medical examiner that the medical examiner has made personal inquiry into the cause and manner of death and is satisfied that no further examination or judicial inquiry concerning it is necessary. Upon request of a funeral director, the person in charge of the body, or the crematory operator, the chief medical examiner shall issue a cremation certificate after the medical examiner has completed an autopsy. The certificate shall be retained by the crematory for a period of three years. ~~For the certificate, the medical examiner is entitled to~~ The person requesting cremation shall pay the department a fee of \$25.00 ~~payable by the person requesting cremation.~~

(d)(1) For all cremations requested for the body of a person who died outside Vermont, the crematory operator ~~must~~ shall do the following before conducting the cremation:

(A) obtain a permit for transit or cremation;

(B) ~~follow the guidelines of the medical examiner or comparable office for the jurisdiction~~ comply with the laws of the state in which the person died, including, ~~to the extent that such waiting period is longer than that imposed by the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, postponing the cremation until the passage of any waiting period imposed by that state; and~~

(C) ~~if the state in which the person died issues a medical examiner's permit, obtain a copy of that permit~~ obtaining a copy of a medical examiner's permit if one is required.

(2) No additional approval from the Vermont medical examiner's office ~~shall be~~ is required if compliance with the ~~guidelines~~ laws of the state in which the person died is achieved.

Sec. 6. 18 V.S.A. § 5202 is amended to read:

§ 5202. DEATH CERTIFICATE; DUTIES OF PHYSICIAN AND

AUTHORIZED LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

(a) The ~~physician~~ licensed health care professional who is last in attendance upon a deceased person ~~during his last illness~~ shall immediately fill out a certificate of death on a form prescribed by the commissioner. For the purposes of this section, a licensed health care professional means a physician, a physician assistant, or an advance practice registered nurse. If he the licensed health care professional who attended the death is unable to state the cause of death, he or she shall immediately notify the physician, if any, who

was in charge of the patient's care, ~~who shall~~ to fill out the certificate. If ~~neither physician is able~~ the physician is unable to state the cause of death, the provisions of section 5205 of this title ~~shall~~ apply. The ~~physician~~ licensed health care professional may, with the consent of the funeral director, delegate to ~~said~~ the funeral director the responsibility of gathering data for and filling out all items except the medical certification of cause of death. All entries, except signatures, on the certificate shall be typed or printed. ~~Such forms and~~ shall contain answers to the following questions:

(1) Was the deceased a veteran of any war?

(2) If so, of what war?

(b) When death occurs ~~to an admitted patient~~ in a hospital and it is impossible to obtain a death certificate from an attending ~~physician~~ licensed health care professional before burial or transportation, any ~~physician~~ licensed health care professional who has access to the facts and can certify that death is not subject to the provisions of section 5205, of this title may complete and sign a preliminary report of death on a form supplied by the commissioner of ~~health~~. The ~~town~~ municipal or county clerk or ~~his~~ a deputy shall accept this report and issue a burial-transit permit. This preliminary report of death may be destroyed six months after a death certificate has been filed. This does not relieve the attending ~~physician~~ licensed health care professional from the



responsibility of completing a death certificate and delivering it to the funeral director within twenty-four hours after death.

~~(c) If a dead body must be removed immediately and a death certificate or preliminary report cannot be obtained, the town clerk, deputy or law enforcement officer may issue a temporary burial transit permit which shall expire forty eight hours after issuance. This does not relieve the attending physician from the responsibility of completing a death certificate and delivering it to the funeral director within twenty four hours after death. Upon receipt of the death certificate, the funeral director shall apply for and the issuing authority shall issue a burial transit permit to replace the temporary permit.~~

#### Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 6 shall take effect on January 1, 2012.

Approved: June 1, 2010