

>>> NEWSLETTER <<<

SUMMER 2024

Current News and Comments from the Pennsylvania
Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear members,

On April 30th, PCCFA members joined the Board of Directors and our Past Presidents to hold our Spring 2024 Board Meeting, our 94th Annual Meeting, and our Legislative Reception. At the board meeting, we spent most of our time reviewing the thirty-two proposed pieces of legislation currently in the state legislature that could have a potential impact on our members and all Pennsylvania cemeteries, crematories, and funeral homes. For each of these, we can assign a response. Of the thirty-two issues, the top five are the bill to lower crematory temperatures in the state; the reduction in experience in the industry term for those applying for inspector positions, define alkaline hydrology, rights to control of the deceased's disposition, and the release of municipal cemeteries from start-up requirements. Please see the article written by our lobbyist Morgan Plant about legislative matters in this issue.

Your board has approved that the KeyNews will become a hybrid publication. Two of our four issues will be printed and mailed. As we analyzed our membership survey, the board concluded that both approaches are necessary.

As I close, it is my pleasure to announce the PCCFA Fall Conference is coming on October 20-21, 2024. It will be in the Philadelphia area and hosted by Laurel Hill Cemetery. The Mid-Atlantic States Cemetery and Funeral Conference has been scheduled for November 8-10, 2025 in Atlantic City, NJ. Details to follow!

All my best to you, your families and co-workers!

Ernie Petersen
PCCFA President

CREMATION TEMPS LEGISLATION IS ON ITS WAY TO THE GOVERNOR 1600 HERE WE COME!

Morgan Plant, PCCFA Government Relations Consultant

At long last, HB 1246, the legislation PCCFA has been advocating for for years has passed both the PA House and Senate (unanimously by the way) and is on its way to the Governor. HB 1246 lowers the temperature requirement to 1600 degrees from the current mandated 1800 degrees. This is congruent with current industry standards, and results in fewer emissions and lower fuel requirements and provides less wear and tear on the equipment.

State Representative Steve Malagari (D-Montgomery) was approached by a constituent crematory operator, Larry Adler from Andrews-Detweiler Funeral Home and Crematory in Souderton, in early 2021. Rep. Malagari sent around a co-sponsorship memo, which brought this issue to the attention of PCCFA. Thus began a cooperative effort between Rep. Malagari and PCCFA to work together to get this legislation over the finish line. Along the way we attracted the attention and support of the PA Funeral Directors Association (PFDA), The Cremation Association of North American (CANA), Matthews, Dignity and American Crematory. Legal assistance from PCCFA Counsel Jason Benion of Saxton Stump proved invaluable. Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria) also introduced legislation on this issue in the Senate. It took two legislative sessions to get it done and was truly a bi-partisan effort. Sen. Langerholc was very helpful in getting his leadership to move the bill to final passage in the Senate at the very end of the process. We also have two House Republican funeral directors, KC Tomlinson (R-Bucks) and Abby Major (R-Armstrong) who spoke in support of this in caucus and on the floor of the House.

This was very much a joint effort by many parts of the death care industry in PA and provided a wonderful opportunity to show when we all work together we can get things done. Kathy Ryan at PFDA and I worked well together and she was quite helpful. Once Governor Shapiro signs the bill we will let you know what the new Act number is. I want to particularly acknowledge Rep. Malagari's effort in this. He really got into the issues, did his own research, participated in calls with the Department of Environmental Protection and kept pestering his leadership and two different Governor's offices (Wolf and Shapiro) to move this forward. PCCFA members also did a great job of educating their members throughout this process.

OTHERS ISSUES OF INTEREST

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Morgan Plant, PCCFA Government Relations Consultant

We are entering the last quarter of the two year 23/24 legislative session. It is an election year and there has been more activity on issues that affect us than in recent memory. This includes:

- HB 1364 Giving Professional Licensing Boards Authority to Give Advisory Opinions to its licensees. PCCFA provided written testimony in support of this. This has not moved.
- HB 2070 by Rep Paul Schemel. Allowing a person to in essence have a death care power of attorney to approve their own disposition, provided they have two independent witnesses, pre-arrange and pre-pay. Voted out of the House Judiciary Committee and has been tabled in the House since late March.
- HB 1172 (Rep. Mary Jo Daley D-Montgomery) Alkaline Hydrolysis (Aquamation) Defined as “cremation”. Passed the House and referred to the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. Sen. Chris Dush has also introduced SB 352 in the Senate on the same topic.
- HB 1730, SB 887 and HB 1641 Exempting Municipal Cemeteries from “initial deposits” if taking over an existing cemetery. These bills, proposed by the Local Government Commission, have been floating back and forth in both the House and Senate. Not sure which one will land but expect something will.
- HB 1819 Rep. Burns (D-Cambria). Reducing experience requirement for funeral home inspectors from 10 years to 7 years. Passed the House, now in the Senate Protection and Professional Licensure Committee.
- HB 919 (Rep. Rabb, D-Phila) Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) referred to Commerce Committee in the House in March.
- SB 1139 (Sen. Mastriano, R-Franklin) regarding provision of information on veterans benefits to consumers by funeral directors and cemeterians. PCCFA negotiated on this language several years ago and does not oppose the bill. Passed Senate and referred to House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness on 5.7.24.

PCCFA’s position on Aquamation and NOR has been neutral. Our position is that consumers should be able to choose whatever method of final disposition is congruent with their personal or religious preferences.

We had a very successful legislative reception on April 30 with a great turnout of both House and Senate members, and Lt. Gov. Austin Davis. All in all, it has been a busy time and is a prime example of the value PCCFA brings to its members.

PAC AND LEGAL DEFENSE FUNDS

Who works with our state representatives to protect your business, consumer grievances and protects us from overly burdensome laws? PCCFA does!

Support our efforts with your personal donation to the PCCFA PAC Fund. If you want to support PCCFA, with a business contribution, consider donating to the Legal Defense Fund.

For more information, contact Ernie Petersen at (814) 243-3837 or e-mail pccfa.exec.team@gmail.com

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“GREEN” BURIALS

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By Jason Benion

>>> COMING SOON NEAR YOU?

New disposition methods could be available soon in the mid-Atlantic, with multiple state governments recently making significant strides in environmentally friendly death care.

These new “green” death care methods of burial and cremation have gained popularity in the last few years because of the benefit to the environment, as they both reduce the carbon footprint of a traditional burial. States across the country have been examining the benefits of them, with some legalizing their use.

Mid-Atlantic state governments have been particularly busy with green burial approvals since the start of May.

Maryland’s governor on May 19 signed into law the [Green Death Care Options Act](#), which legalizes and provides for the regulation of alkaline hydrolysis – also known as water cremation or aquamation – and natural organic reduction, sometimes referred to as “human composting.”

At one time, it was thought that alkaline hydrolysis was already legal in Maryland, but a 2023 [attorney general’s opinion](#) concluded otherwise.

Delaware’s governor followed suit on May 16 and signed into law [HB 162](#), which authorizes natural organic reduction to be used in that state.

In Pennsylvania, [HB 1172](#), which would legalize alkaline hydrolysis for human disposition, passed the House by a 138-63 vote on May 1 and is under consideration by the Senate. Alkaline hydrolysis is already legal for pet and animal disposition in Pennsylvania.

In New Jersey, [a bill](#) placing natural organic reduction under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Mortuary Science was unanimously voted out of committee on May 16.

These new forms of disposition are now legal in a growing number of states. Alkaline hydrolysis is legal in [about half the states](#), while [10 states](#) now allow natural organic reduction.

If you are a death care provider with questions about these or other new methods of disposition, please contact attorney [Jason Benion](#).



**FALL
CONFERENCE**

Save the Date!
2024 PCCFA Fall Conference
October 20-21, 2024 in Philadelphia
Hosted by Laurel Hill Cemetery!



ONLINE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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PCCFA members can now renew their membership instantly online! For all new members, once your application and reviewed and approved by the executive team, an account/login will be created automatically after you make your first membership payment.

>>> BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- The eKeynews, a four times a year publication, delivered by e-mail.
- Two conferences a year with continuing education credits for funeral directors at PA locations. (Every other year, our fall conference is held in Atlantic City with four other states and there the education program provides credits and certifications.
- A discount on the MemorialPro insurance product from the Regan Agency, Inc.
- Constant Contact available for rapid communications. Suppliers take note!
- Access to our supplier members network.
- The PCCFA complaint hotline helping us help cemeteries with consumer issues.
- An annual legislative reception, to make sure your representatives know they can come to us for assistance with pending legislation and constituent issues.
- A lobbyist looking out for our best interests in Harrisburg.
- Access to other cemeterians to network and brainstorm amid the changing and evolving death care industry. Green burials, spotted lantern fly, etc.

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FUNERAL BOARD AND REAL ESTATE COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

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By Jason Benoin

On June 29, 2023, the Pennsylvania Senate unanimously confirmed new members to the State Board of Funeral Directors and State Real Estate Commission.

Funeral Board

Andrew J. Chomko and Gregory K. Furlong were named as professional members of the Funeral Board.

Chomko is a funeral director at Edward J. Chomko Funeral Home and Cremation Services in Scranton, PA. Chomko is also a veteran of the Army's 1st Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and the co-founder of Fight4Vets, a nonprofit dedicated to helping veterans in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Furlong is a funeral director at Furlong Funeral Home in Summerville, PA, which, according to this article, was the first funeral home in Jefferson County to install a crematory in 2017. Eric D. Ruggeri was named as a public member of the Board. He is an officer with the Westtown-East Goshen Regional Police Department in Chester County. Ruggeri is also a member of the Region 3 DMORT team and has been a contributor to Kates-Boylston publications.

This was the first meeting for new board member Charles F. Snyder, III, a third-generation funeral director from the family-owned and operated Snyder Funeral Homes in Lancaster, Pa.

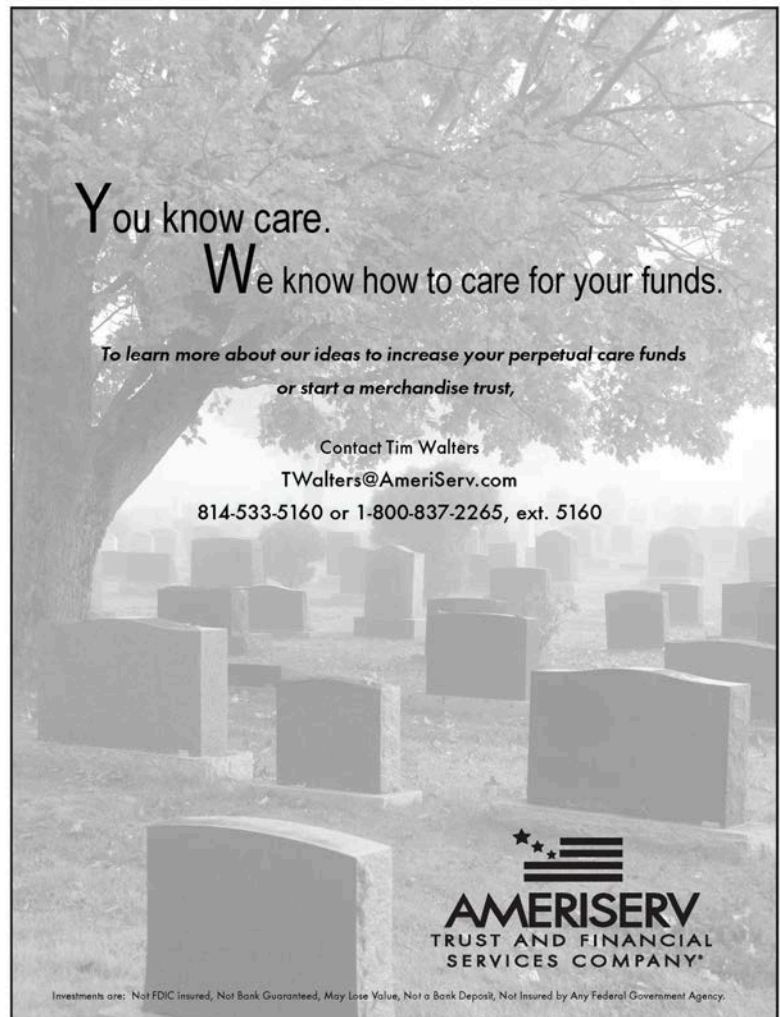
These appointments return the Board to its full complement of nine members for the first time in two years.

Real Estate Commission

Guy N. Saxton was named the cemetery broker member of the Real Estate Commission.

Saxton is broker of record for Northampton Memorial Shrine in Easton, PA and a past president of the Pennsylvania Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association.

If you are a funeral home or cemetery with questions about your licensing board, please contact attorney Jason Benoin.



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