

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2014 SESSION

CHAPTER 355

An Act to amend and reenact § 54.1-2818.1 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 54.1-2807.02, relating to dead bodies; absence of next of kin.

[S 77]

Approved March 27, 2014

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 54.1-2818.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 54.1-2807.02 as follows:

§ 54.1-2807.02. Absence of next of kin.

In the absence of a next of kin, a person designated to make arrangements for the decedent's burial or the disposition of his remains pursuant to § 54.1-2825, an agent named in an advance directive pursuant to § 54.1-2984, or any guardian appointed pursuant to Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 64.2 who may exercise the powers conferred in the order of appointment or by § 64.2-2019, or upon the failure or refusal of such next of kin, designated person, agent, or guardian to accept responsibility for the disposition of the decedent, then any other person 18 years of age or older who is able to provide positive identification of the deceased and is willing to pay for the costs associated with the disposition of the decedent's remains shall be authorized to make arrangements for such disposition of the decedent's remains. If a funeral service establishment or funeral service licensee makes arrangements with a person other than a next of kin, designated person, agent, or guardian in accordance with this section, then the funeral service licensee or funeral service establishment shall be immune from civil liability unless such act, decision, or omission resulted from bad faith or malicious intent.

§ 54.1-2818.1. Prerequisites for cremation.

No dead human body shall be cremated without permission of the medical examiner as required by § 32.1-284 and visual identification of the deceased by the next-of-kin or his representative, who may be any person designated to make arrangements for the decedent's burial or the disposition of his remains pursuant to § 54.1-2825, an agent named in an advance directive pursuant to § 54.1-2984, ~~or a sheriff, upon court order, if no next-of-kin, designated person, or agent is available,~~ or any guardian appointed pursuant to Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 64.2 who may exercise the powers conferred in the order of appointment or by § 64.2-2019. If no next of kin, designated person, agent, or guardian is available or willing to make visual identification of the deceased, such identification shall be made by a member of the primary law-enforcement agency of the city or county in which the person or institution having initial custody of the body is located, pursuant to court order. When visual identification is not feasible, other positive identification of the deceased may be used as a prerequisite for cremation. Unless such act, decision, or omission resulted from bad faith or malicious intent, the funeral service establishment, funeral service licensee, crematory, cemetery, primary law-enforcement officer, or sheriff shall be immune from civil liability for any act, decision, or omission resulting from cremation. Nothing in this section shall prevent a law-enforcement agency other than the primary law-enforcement agency from performing the duties established by this section if so requested by the primary law-enforcement agency and agreed to by the other law-enforcement agency.