

## MFDA 2018 Minnesota Legislative Session Summary

The 2018 legislative session adjourned on time but there is little to show for the three months of legislative work – and in the case of the cremator operator legislation, over two years of work on the issue. For your information, below is an outline of various issues discussed during session and attached is a 2018 general session overview, as well as a summary of tax issues.

### **Cremator Operator Certification**

Over the past two years, MFDA members have shown an interest in legislation to require training or certification for those performing cremations. The 2017 version of the cremator operator legislation required certification for anyone performing cremations, regardless of licensure. The 2018 proposal only required certification for unlicensed individuals performing cremations. These individuals are currently permitted to perform cremations and the bill clarified “proper training” within 149a.95 subdivision 3, to require completion of a cremator operator certification program. In addition, it included the option of adding training on cremation practice to the body preparation, care or handling requirements (3 CE Hours) of funeral directors ongoing requirements. This year’s version of HF1025 (Kiel - Crookston) / Senate companion SF1665 (Weber – Luverne), enjoyed broad support from industry stakeholders, the Department of Health, and key legislators.

There was some confusion when inaccurate information was provided by some testifiers in a House hearing on the bill. However, we were able to clear that up quickly, as legislators recognize MFDA as the exclusive representatives of the funeral profession and broader funeral industry in Minnesota.

Ultimately, the proposal was included in the Supplemental Budget bill, a massive 990-page bill with spending and policy across all agencies. Representative Joe Schomacker (House HHS Reform Chair), Representative Matt Dean (House HHS Finance Chair), and Senator Michelle Benson (Senate HHS Policy and Finance Chair) all strongly supported the measure and, along with their Conference Committee counterparts from the House and Senate, voted to include the language in the package. The Supplemental Budget bill passed both the House and Senate floors with bipartisan support. Unfortunately, the bill was vetoed by Governor Dayton just days after the session adjourned due to his opposition to a variety of provisions in the bill. The cremator operator language was not among the provisions cited by the Governor as problematic and the Department of Health had sent a letter to legislators in support of the provision. With strong support among legislators on this issue, we should be able to achieve passage again in the future.

### **Looking Forward**

MFDA has strong relationships in place and this year was a step forward in terms of grassroots outreach from MFDA members to legislators. Additionally, our solid working relationship with the Department of Health is important for the industry on issues of interest to MFDA members. There is no doubt this helps to avoid miscommunication and offers opportunities to work together to align our goals for the profession. MFDA will continue to attend the Mortuary Science Ad Hoc Committee and collaborate with stakeholders on future proposals.

We must also discuss plans for working with a new Administration, as Governor Dayton is not running for re-election. Once we know the general election candidates following the August 14<sup>th</sup> primary, we should craft a strategy for outreach to talk about issues of concern to the MFDA.