

No. 9. An act relating to the disposition of the remains of veterans.

(H.394)

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

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 1586 is added to read:

§ 1586. INTERMENT OF UNCLAIMED REMAINS OF VETERANS

The Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery shall accept and inter the unclaimed remains of an eligible veteran if:

(1) a funeral director or crematory operator has determined pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 5227(c)(2) that interment of the veteran's remains in the Cemetery is appropriate; or

(2) the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has determined pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 5227(d)(4) that interment of the veteran's remains in the Cemetery is appropriate.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 5227 is amended to read:

§ 5227. RIGHT TO DISPOSITION

(a) If there is no written directive of the decedent, in the following order of priority, one or more competent adults shall have the right to determine the disposition of the remains of a decedent, including the location, manner, and conditions of disposition and arrangements for funeral goods and services:

* * *

(9) the funeral director or crematory operator with custody of the body, after attesting in writing that a good faith effort has been made to contact the individuals described in subdivisions (1) through (8) of this subsection; or

* * *

(c)(1) If the disposition of the remains of a decedent is determined under subdivision (a)(9) of this section and the funeral director or crematory operator has cremated the remains, the funeral director or crematory operator shall retain the remains for three years and, if no interested party as provided in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section claims the decedent's remains after three years, the funeral director or crematory operator shall arrange for the final disposition of the cremated remains consistent with any applicable law and standard funeral practices.

(2) Notwithstanding any provision of subdivision (1) of this subsection to the contrary, a funeral director or crematory operator may determine that the unclaimed cremated remains of a deceased veteran shall be interred at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 1586 if:

(A) at least 180 days have passed since the funeral director or crematory operator cremated the remains;

(B) the funeral director or crematory operator either:

(i) has actual knowledge that there is no interested party as provided in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section to claim the decedent's remains; or

(ii) after making reasonable efforts, has been unable to locate and contact any known interested party as provided in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section; and

(C) the funeral director or crematory operator has confirmed with the Office of Veterans Affairs that the deceased veteran is eligible to be interred at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

(d)(1) If the disposition of the remains of a decedent is determined under subdivision (a)(10) of this section, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may contract with a funeral director or crematory operator to cremate the remains of the decedent.

* * *

(3) The cremated remains shall be returned to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The Office shall retain the remains for three years, and if no interested party, as described in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section, claims the decedent's remains after three years, the Office shall arrange for the final disposition of the cremated remains consistent with any applicable law and standard funeral practices.

(4) Notwithstanding any provision of subdivision (3) of this subsection to the contrary, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may determine that the unclaimed cremated remains of a deceased veteran shall be interred at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 1586 if:

(A) at least 180 days have passed since the remains were cremated;

(B) the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner either:

(i) has actual knowledge that there is no interested party as provided in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section to claim the decedent's remains; or

(ii) after making reasonable efforts, has been unable to locate and contact any known interested party as provided in subdivisions (a)(1) through (8) of this section; and

(C) the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has confirmed with the Office of Veterans Affairs that the deceased veteran is eligible to be interred at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Date Governor signed bill: April 23, 2019