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The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards

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Photo Included: 2011-2012 ICFSEB Board of Directors Executive Committee (.jpg)

The Conference Holds 107th Annual Meeting

Myrtle Beach, S.C. – The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards held its 107th annual meeting March 3-4, 2011, at the Marina Inn at Grande Dunes in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The two day event focused on regulation in the death care profession and was attended by members of the regulatory community from throughout the United States and Canada.

Thursday morning began with two simultaneous sessions: the annual meeting of the Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards (AEFSB), and a presentation for regulatory board members. The annual AEFSB meeting was attended by nearly 20 regulators from across North America. The meeting focused on a wide range of topics including legislation in individual jurisdictions, resomation, and continuing education. Dale Atkinson, of Atkinson & Atkinson, gave the presentation for regulatory board members. His presentation focused on a wide range of questions and issues for board members to identify and consider when regulating their jurisdictions, including the role of the board, regulation within the profession, and board, board member, and staff immunity.

The event officially kicked off at noon when President Robert Barnes, CFSP, called the meeting to order and welcomed all industry professionals, regulators, and educators in attendance. Following the opening session, the chair of the Resolutions and Bylaws Committee, Joseph Richer, presented the proposed bylaws changes and addressed the purpose of the amendments. The amended bylaws were adopted unanimously by all members present.

Attendees were then treated to three inclusive presentations on risk management. Dale Atkinson started the afternoon off with a session on ways to mitigate the liabilities associated with regulatory boards, citing cases to illustrate the issues. Troy Elliott, communications director for the Association of Social Work Boards, delivered a highly interactive presentation entitled Sweepstakes: Legislative Raids. The focus of the discussion was to define fund sweeps and what they mean to regulatory boards as well as offer some practical approaches to dealing with them.

The final speaker of the afternoon was Timothy Koch, mortician investigator of the Minnesota Department of Health, gave a highly informative presentation on emergency preparedness. He spoke in depth about what measures Minnesota has taken to prepare for times of crises, involving mass fatalities including tracking systems and mobile emergency operation centers.

The second day of the event began with a presentation from David Christian, III, of the South Carolina Division of Professional and Occupational Licensing. Mr. Christian led a discussion on ways to reduce paper through efficiencies in technology by showcasing the document management procedures of attendees and how they utilize paperless technology. Craig Tregillus, funeral rule coordinator for the Federal Trade Commission, led the second session of the morning. Mr. Tregillus gave a well received and educational presentation on HR 3655 Bereaved Consumer Bill of Rights, focusing on funeral homes, cemeteries, and retailers.

District meetings followed the morning sessions. These meetings gave attendees an opportunity to discuss issues, and best practices with fellow regulators from other districts. During the district meetings, elections were held for districts two, four, seven, and nine.

The Board welcomed Dr. Hari Close, III, president of the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors from district two, Robert Carter from the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors from district four, and Mark Riley, executive director of the Oklahoma Funeral Board from district seven. Bart Burton of the Nevada State Funeral Board was elected director of district nine after serving previously as an appointee to the position.

Friday afternoon kicked off with the annual awards luncheon. This year President Barnes honored Patrick Obarzanek with the President's Distinguished Service Award, which was accepted in a standing ovation. Outgoing board members, Joseph Richer and Billie Watson Hughes, were recognized for their commitment and outstanding service to The Conference through their service on both the board and the executive committee.

At the close of the awards luncheon, Randy Bangert, director of district six, was sworn in as president of The Conference alongside the new executive committee members. District Eight Director Bart Thompson was elected to serve as vice president, and District Three Director Gail Thomas-DeWitt was elected to serve as secretary/treasurer.

The afternoon continued with two final presentations. The first session focused on legislative updates and recent regulatory cases presented by Dale Atkinson. The second and final session was an afternoon spotlight on alkaline hydrolysis. Mark Riley gave a presentation on

the process followed by a group activity moderated by Paul Harris of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service, in which attendees split into six pre-determined groups to discuss and analyze the future of resomation regulation.

The annual meeting concluded with a formal dinner at the magnificent Grande Dunes Ocean Club. The venue, which overlooked the Atlantic Ocean, was the perfect setting for attendees to relax and reflect on the topics from the past two days.

The ICFSEB annual meeting provides a valuable opportunity for those interested in furthering funeral service regulation to come together for exchange of information, problem-solving strategies, and goals for the future of the funeral service profession. The 2012 convention is slated for February 29 - March 1, 2012 in Little Rock, Arkansas. For more information on the convention or The Conference, call 479-442-7076, or visit www.theconferenceonline.org.

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