

Senate, March 9, 1998. The Committee on Judiciary reported through SEN. WILLIAMS, 29th DIST., Chairman of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING SUICIDE NOTES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 19a-407 of the general statutes is  
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
3 thereof:

4 (a) All law enforcement officers, state's  
5 attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, other officials,  
6 physicians, funeral directors, embalmers and other  
7 persons shall promptly notify the Office of the  
8 Chief Medical Examiner of any death coming to  
9 their attention which is subject to investigation  
10 by the Chief Medical Examiner under this chapter,  
11 shall assist in making dead bodies and related  
12 evidence available to that office for  
13 investigations and postmortem examinations,  
14 including autopsies, and shall cooperate fully  
15 with said office in making the investigations and  
16 examinations herein provided for. In conducting  
17 such investigations or examinations, the Chief  
18 Medical Examiner may issue subpoenas requiring the  
19 production of medical reports, records or other  
20 documents concerning the death under investigation  
21 and compelling the attendance and testimony of any  
22 person having pertinent knowledge of such death.

23 (b) In cases of apparent homicide or suicide,  
24 or of accidental death, the cause of which is

25 obscure, the scene of the event shall not be  
26 disturbed until authorized by the Chief Medical  
27 Examiner or his authorized representative. Upon  
28 receipt of notification of a death as provided  
29 herein, the Chief Medical Examiner or his  
30 authorized representative shall view and take  
31 charge of the body without delay.

32 (c) In conducting his investigation, [except  
33 as may be otherwise directed by the state's  
34 attorney or an assistant state's attorney,] the  
35 Chief Medical Examiner or his authorized  
36 representative shall [take possession of] HAVE  
37 ACCESS TO any objects, writings or other articles  
38 of property IN THE CUSTODY OF ANY LAW ENFORCEMENT  
39 OFFICIAL which in [his] THE CHIEF MEDICAL  
40 EXAMINER'S opinion may be useful in establishing  
41 the cause or manner of death. [and hold, analyze  
42 or deliver them to the appropriate law enforcement  
43 officials.] UPON THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER'S  
44 REQUEST, A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL HAVING CUSTODY  
45 OF SUCH ARTICLES SHALL DELIVER THEM TO THE CHIEF  
46 MEDICAL EXAMINER, ALONG WITH COPIES OF ANY REPORTS  
47 OF THE ANALYSIS OF SUCH ARTICLES BY SUCH LAW  
48 ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL. THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER  
49 SHALL ANALYZE SUCH ARTICLES AND RETURN THEM TO THE  
50 OFFICIAL FROM WHOM THEY WERE OBTAINED. When such  
51 articles are no longer required to be kept for the  
52 purposes of justice, [they shall be delivered] THE  
53 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL WHO HAS CUSTODY OF THEM  
54 SHALL DELIVER THEM to the person or persons  
55 entitled to their custody. [or, if they] IF SUCH  
56 ARTICLES are not claimed by such person or persons  
57 entitled thereto within one year after the date of  
58 death, such articles may be disposed of by the law  
59 enforcement official as provided in section 54-36.  
60 (d) Any person who wilfully fails to comply  
61 with any provision of this section shall be fined  
62 not more than five hundred dollars or imprisoned  
63 not more than one year, or both.

64 JUD COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 33 NAY 0 JF

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"THE FOLLOWING FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND BILL ANALYSIS ARE PREPARED FOR THE BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF INFORMATION, SUMMARIZATION AND EXPLANATION AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR EITHER HOUSE THEREOF FOR ANY PURPOSE."

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**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT - BILL NUMBER SB 267**

STATE IMPACT	Minimal Savings, see explanation below
MUNICIPAL IMPACT	None, see explanation below
STATE AGENCY(S)	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice

EXPLANATION OF ESTIMATES:

STATE AND MUNICIPAL IMPACT: There is a minimal savings from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as a result of the passage of this bill.

Storage equipment will not be needed in the Office with suicide notes being returned to law enforcement officials.

The passage of this bill would have no fiscal impact on State or municipal law enforcement agencies. Currently, objects, writings or other articles of property that may be useful in establishing the manner or cause of a death are routinely provided to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner by most law enforcement agencies.

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**OLR BILL ANALYSIS**

SB 267

**AN ACT CONCERNING SUICIDE NOTES**

**SUMMARY:** This bill deletes a requirement that the chief medical examiner "take possession of any objects, writings or other articles of property" he believes may be useful in establishing the cause of death in any homicide, suicide, or accidental death. Apparently, in practice, the phrase "objects, writings or other articles" refers only to suicide notes.

The bill requires that the chief medical examiner have access to this property. Any law enforcement official having custody of such articles must give them, along with any analysis of them done by the official, to the medical examiner on his request for his analysis. The bill requires the examiner to return them to the law enforcement official.

The bill also eliminates the authority of a state's attorney or assistant state's attorney to direct the chief medical examiner not to take possession of objects, writings, or articles, since under its provisions he is no longer required to do so.

The bill also makes miscellaneous minor changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 1998

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute  
Yea 33      Nay 0