

2016 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 672

BY REPRESENTATIVE DAVIS

HUMAN REMAINS: Provides relative to rights and requirements of certain persons authorized to arrange the disposition of human remains

1 AN ACT  
2 To amend and reenact R.S. 8:655(A), (B)(1), and (D) and R.S. 37:848(B), 876(A), (B), (D),  
3 and (F), 877(B)(1)(a)(v) and (b)(ii), and 879(K) and to enact R.S. 8:655(E) and (F)  
4 and R.S. 37:855 and 876(G) and (H), relative to the disposing of human remains; to  
5 provide with respect to a decedent's valid will; to provide for a change in priority of  
6 persons with respect to the right to control interment and the authorized arrangement  
7 of cremation; to distinguish adult grandchildren as a priority group of persons; to  
8 exclude any person charged with certain crimes against the decedent from the right  
9 of interment; to allow the disposal of certain human remains by certain assistants of  
10 certified embalmers; to provide for the right to arrange funeral goods and services;  
11 to limit liability of certain persons with respect to the arrangement of funeral goods  
12 and services; to require a majority relative to certain surviving family members and  
13 the right to authorize cremation; to expressly make certain military provisions  
14 applicable to cremation authorizations; to require the attachment of declarations to  
15 cremation authorization forms; to exempt the remains of certain fetuses with respect  
16 to provisions requiring identification of human remains; to authorize a representative  
17 of a funeral establishment to deliver cremated human remains to authorized persons;  
18 to authorize a legal entity to receive cremated human remains; to require funeral  
19 establishments and cemetery authorities to retain certain receipts; to provide for other  
20 clarifying changes; and to provide for related matters.

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

2 Section 1. R.S. 8:655(A), (B)(1), and (D) are hereby amended and reenacted and  
3 R.S. 8:655(E) and (F) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

4 §655. Right of disposing of remains; military personnel; limitation of liability

5 A. ~~The right to control interment, as defined in R.S. 8:1(26), of the remains~~  
6 ~~of a deceased person, unless~~ Unless other specific directions have been given or the  
7 designation of a specific person to control disposition has been made by the decedent  
8 in the form of a valid will or a written and notarized declaration, ~~vests in and~~  
9 ~~devolves upon the following in the order named~~ the following persons, in the priority  
10 listed, have the right to control and authorize the interment of a deceased person, as  
11 defined in R.S. 8:1(26):

12 (1) The person designated to control disposition by the decedent in the form  
13 of a valid will or a written and notarized declaration.

14 ~~(1)~~(2) The surviving spouse, if there is no pending petition for divorce ~~has~~  
15 ~~been~~ filed by either spouse prior to the death of the decedent spouse.

16 ~~(2)~~(3) A majority of the surviving adult children of the decedent, ~~not~~  
17 ~~including grandchildren or other more remote descendants.~~

18 (4) A majority of the surviving adult grandchildren of the decedent.

19 ~~(3)~~(5) The surviving parents of the decedent.

20 ~~(4)~~(6) A majority of the surviving adult ~~brothers and sisters~~ siblings of the  
21 decedent.

22 ~~(5)~~(7) A majority of the surviving adult persons respectively in the next  
23 degrees of kindred as established in Civil Code Article 880 et seq.

24 B.(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A of this Section, if If  
25 the decedent died in a manner described by 10 U.S.C. §1481 (a)(1) through (8) while  
26 serving in any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Reserve  
27 Forces, or National Guard, and the decedent executed a United States Department  
28 of Defense Record of Emergency Data, known as DD Form 93, or its successor form,  
29 the right to control interment for the decedent shall devolve upon the Person

1 Authorized to Direct Disposition, also referred to as the PADD, as indicated on the  
2 DD Form 93 or its successor form.

3 \* \* \*

4 D. Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A of this Section, in ~~in~~ the  
5 event that the coroner releases the remains of the decedent to an interested person  
6 pursuant to R.S. 9:1551(A)(1), such person ~~shall have~~ has the right to control the  
7 disposition of the remains of the decedent.

8 E. Any person charged with first or second degree murder or voluntary  
9 manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death forfeits the right to control  
10 interment, and such right shall pass to the remaining persons in the priority listed in  
11 Subsection A of this Section.

12 F. In the absence of specific directions given by the decedent, if the  
13 authorization of the person or persons with the right to control disposition cannot be  
14 obtained, a final judgment of a district court shall be required.

15 Section 2. R.S. 37:848(B), 876(A), (B), (D), and (F), 877(B)(1)(a)(v) and (b)(ii), and  
16 879(K) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 37:855 and 876(G) and (H) are hereby  
17 enacted to read as follows:

18 §848. Unlawful practice

19 \* \* \*

20 B. Every member of a firm or corporation engaged in the practice of the  
21 science of embalming or the business of funeral directing, or both, and the manager  
22 of each place of business conducted by such firm or corporation, whose duties  
23 engage him directly in the care and preparation, or the supervision of the disposal,  
24 burial or disinterment of dead human bodies, shall possess a certificate issued under  
25 the provisions of this Chapter. ~~No such firm or corporation shall permit an assistant~~  
26 ~~who is not a certified embalmer under the provisions of this Chapter to care for or~~  
27 ~~prepare for burial or transportation, the body of any person who has died of a~~  
28 ~~communicable disease.~~

29 \* \* \*



1 B. Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A of this Section, if ~~if~~ the  
2 coroner releases the remains of a decedent to an interested person pursuant to R.S.  
3 9:1551(A)(1), such person may serve as the authorizing agent for cremation.

4 \* \* \*

5 D. Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A of this Section, in ~~in~~ the  
6 case of those individuals whose disposition is the responsibility of the state or any  
7 of its instrumentalities, a public administrator, medical examiner, coroner,  
8 state-appointed guardian, or any other public official charged with arranging the  
9 disposition of the decedent may serve as the authorizing agent.

10 \* \* \*

11 F.(1) If the decedent died in a manner described by 10 U.S.C. §1481 (a)(1)  
12 through (8) while serving in any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the  
13 United States Reserve Forces, or National Guard, and the decedent executed a United  
14 States Department of Defense Record of Emergency Data, known as DD Form 93,  
15 or its successor form, the right to serve as an authorizing agent for cremation shall  
16 devolve upon the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition, also referred to as the  
17 PADD, as indicated on the DD Form 93 or its successor form.

18 (2) There is no liability for a cemetery authority, funeral establishment,  
19 funeral director, crematory authority, or the employees or agents of any of them to  
20 whom a copy of a DD Form 93 is presented, purportedly executed by the decedent  
21 for conduction of a cremation of the decedent's remains, pursuant to the instructions  
22 of the PADD as indicated on the DD Form 93, or for relying on the representation  
23 of the PADD that the decedent died in a manner described in Paragraph (1) of this  
24 Subsection.

25 G.(1) In the event that the decedent has made multiple valid wills or  
26 notarized declarations of disposition pursuant to Subsection A of this Section, the  
27 last notarized declaration valid will or notarized declaration, whichever is dated last,  
28 shall control.

1           (2) In the event that the decedent has made one or more valid wills or  
2           notarized declarations of interment pursuant to Subsection A of this Section, and the  
3           decedent executed a DD Form 93 and died in a manner described in Subsection F of  
4           this Section, the valid will, declaration, or the DD Form 93, whichever is dated last,  
5           shall control the right to serve as an authorizing agent for cremation.

6           H. Any person charged with first or second degree murder or voluntary  
7           manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death forfeits the right to serve as an  
8           authorizing agent, and such right shall pass to the remaining persons in the priority  
9           listed in Subsection A of this Section.

10           §877. Authorization to arrange cremation; authorization to cremate; refusal to  
11           arrange a cremation; refusal to cremate

12   \*       \*       \*

13           B. A crematory authority shall have authority to cremate human remains  
14           when they are delivered by the funeral establishment and upon receipt of all of the  
15           following:

16   \*       \*       \*

17           (1)(a) A cremation authorization form signed by an authorizing agent. Such  
18           form shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

19   \*       \*       \*

20           (v) A representation that the authorizing agent has the right to authorize the  
21           cremation of the decedent and that the authorizing agent is not aware of any living  
22           person who has a superior or equal priority to that of the authorizing agent. If the  
23           authorizing agent is acting pursuant to a valid will or a written and notarized  
24           declaration made by the decedent, a copy of the will or declaration shall be attached  
25           to the cremation authorization form.

26   \*       \*       \*

27           (b)

28   \*       \*       \*

1           (ii) The cremation authorization form, other than preneed cremation forms,  
2 shall also be signed by a funeral director of the funeral establishment arranging the  
3 cremation. The funeral director shall not be responsible for any of the  
4 representations made by the authorizing agent, unless the individual has actual  
5 knowledge to the contrary. However, the information requested by Item (a)(i) of this  
6 Paragraph shall be considered to be a representation of the funeral director or funeral  
7 establishment that the human remains delivered to the crematory authority have been  
8 identified as the decedent listed on the cremation authorization by the coroner  
9 pursuant to Item (b)(iii) of this Paragraph or positively identified after a viewing of  
10 the remains by a person who is the authorizing agent or a member of the class of  
11 which the authorizing agent is composed or a designated representative, ~~thereof~~  
12 unless the remains are from a spontaneous fetal death as defined in R.S. 40:32(16),  
13 in which case a viewing is not required if written identification is received when such  
14 remains are released to the funeral director. The information requested by Item  
15 (a)(iii) of this Paragraph shall be considered to be a representation of the funeral  
16 director or funeral establishment of any information received by the funeral director  
17 or funeral establishment pursuant to R.S. 40:1099.1.

\* \* \*

18  
19 §879. Cremation procedures; pacemakers; cremation retorts; refusal to accept a  
20 cremation container; unauthorized persons in crematory; simultaneous  
21 cremation of the human remains of multiple persons; cremation residue;  
22 packaging and delivery of cremated human remains

\* \* \*

23  
24 K. Cremated human remains shall be made available by the funeral ~~director~~  
25 establishment or the crematory authority to the ~~individual~~ person or legal entity  
26 specified on the cremation authorization form. ~~The funeral director or A~~  
27 representative of the funeral establishment or crematory authority and the ~~individual~~  
28 person or representative of the legal entity receiving the cremated human remains  
29 shall sign a receipt indicating the name of the deceased, the date, time, and place of

1       ~~the receipt~~ the person's or representative's receipt of the cremated human remains,  
 2       and any other information set out in the rules and regulations governing crematories  
 3       to establish a chain of custody. ~~The crematory authority shall retain a copy of the~~  
 4       ~~receipt~~ A copy of the receipt shall be retained by the funeral establishment or  
 5       crematory authority whose respective representative delivers the cremated human  
 6       remains to the person or representative of the legal entity specified on the cremation  
 7       authorization form. After this delivery, the cremated human remains may be  
 8       transported in any manner in this state, with a copy of the burial-transit permit, and  
 9       disposed of in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter.

10       Section 3. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
 11       signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
 12       by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
 13       vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
 14       effective on the day following such approval.

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#### DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HB 672 Engrossed

2016 Regular Session

Davis

**Abstract:** Makes changes to law applicable to the disposition of human remains.

Present law provides for the priority of certain persons in determining the disposition of human remains. The priority listed in present law is as follows:

- (1) The surviving spouse, if no petition for divorce has been filed by either spouse prior to the death of the decedent spouse.
- (2) A majority of the surviving adult children of the decedent, not including grandchildren or other more remote descendants.
- (3) The surviving parents of the decedent.
- (4) A majority of the surviving adult brothers and sisters of the decedent.
- (5) A majority of the adult persons respectively in the next degrees of kin as established in present law (C.C. Art. 880 et seq).

Proposed law changes present law to provide as a preference, prior to the surviving spouse, the person designated to control disposition by the decedent in the form of a valid will or a written and notarized declaration.



Present law authorizes a surviving spouse as a priority group of persons if the surviving spouse did not file a petition for divorce prior to the decedent's death. Proposed law clarifies present law to provide that a filed petition is a pending petition.

Proposed law adds adult grandchildren as a priority group of persons. Clarifies that a majority of the adult persons in the next degrees of kin are survivors of the decedent.

Proposed law provides that persons charged with 1st or 2nd degree murder or voluntary manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death are forfeited the right to control interment, including cremation authorization. Further provides that the control of interment and cremation authority will be passed to the remaining persons in the priority listed in present law and proposed law.

Proposed law provides that in the absence of specific directions given by the decedent, if the authorization of the person or persons with the right to control disposition cannot be obtained, a final judgment of a district court is required.

Proposed law deletes a present law provision prohibiting assistants not certified as embalmers from preparing the bodies of persons deceased from a communicable disease.

Proposed law provides that persons, in the priority listed in present law and proposed law, have the right to arrange with a funeral director or funeral establishment, the funeral goods and services regarding the remains of a decedent. Exempts a funeral director, funeral establishment, or respective employees from liability for following the directions or relying on the representation of a person who purports to have the preferential right to arrange for funeral goods and services.

Present law provides for the priority of certain persons to serve as an authorizing agent for cremation of a decedent's remains. The priority listed in present law is as follows:

- (1) The surviving spouse, if no petition for divorce has been filed by either spouse prior to the death of the decedent spouse.
- (2) The surviving adult children of the decedent, not including grandchildren or other more remote descendants.
- (3) The surviving parents of the decedent.
- (4) The surviving adult brothers and sisters of the decedent.
- (5) The surviving adult persons respectively in the next degrees of kin as established in present law (C.C. Art. 880 et seq).

Proposed law changes present law to provide as a preference, prior to the surviving spouse, the following persons:

- (1) Any person arranging the cremation, if the decedent gave specific directions in the form of a valid will or a written and notarized declaration providing for disposition of his remains by cremation.
- (2) The person designated to control disposition by the decedent in the form of a valid will or a written and notarized declaration.

Proposed law further changes present law to require, with respect to the prioritized right to serve as an authorizing agent for cremation, a majority of the surviving adult children, a majority of the surviving adult siblings, and a majority of the surviving adult persons in the next degrees of kin to the decedent.

Present law requires funeral directors and crematory authorities to receive a written cremation authorization form from an authorizing agent. Further requires the authorization form to include information of the authorizing agent's representation that the agent has the right to authorize cremation, and that the agent is without knowledge of any living person who has a superior or equal priority to that of the authorizing agent.

Proposed law retains present law and further requires a copy of the decedent's valid will or written and notarized declaration to be attached to the cremation authorization form if the agent is acting pursuant to the declaration.

Present law provides certain provisions for military persons who died in a certain manner while having a written and notarized declaration of interment and a DD Form 93. Proposed law makes present law expressly applicable to interment by cremation.

Present law requires representation or positive identification made by certain persons that respective human remains are those of the decedent. Proposed law excludes from present law the human remains of fetuses deceased as the result of spontaneous fetal death, if written identification is received when such remains are released to the funeral director.

Present law provides for a funeral director or representative of a crematory authority to deliver cremated human remains to authorized persons. Further requires a receipt to be signed by the respective funeral director or representative of a crematory authority and the authorized person receiving the cremated human remains.

Proposed law changes present law to authorize a representative of a funeral establishment to exchange in the delivery of cremated human remains. Authorizes a legal entity to receive cremated human remains. Requires retention of the signed delivery receipt by the funeral establishment or crematory authority whose respective representative delivers the cremated human remains to the person or representative of the legal entity specified on the cremation authorization form.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 8:655(A), (B)(1), and (D) and R.S. 37:848(B), 876(A), (B), (D), and (F), 877(B)(1)(a)(v) and (b)(ii), and 879(K); Adds R.S. 8:655(E) and (F) and R.S. 37:855 and 876(G) and (H))

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Commerce to the original bill:

1. Provide for a person to authorize the interment of a decedent.
2. Provide if a decedent gives, in a valid will, directions or designates a person to dispose of the decedent's remains, whether by burial or cremation, the direction or designation provided in the will has highest priority for disposal of the decedent's remains.
3. Require the final judgment of a district court if a decedent did not provide specific instructions for disposition and the authorization of the person or persons with the right to control disposition cannot be obtained.
4. Provide that a viewing is not required if human remains are from a spontaneous fetal death and written identification is given when such remains are released to the funeral director.

5. Require the written receipt of persons' exchange of cremated human remains to identify the place of the physical exchange of such remains.
6. Provide that such receipts are to establish a chain of custody.
7. Require a copy of the receipt to be retained by the funeral establishment or crematory authority whose respective representative delivers cremated human remains to a person or certain representative.