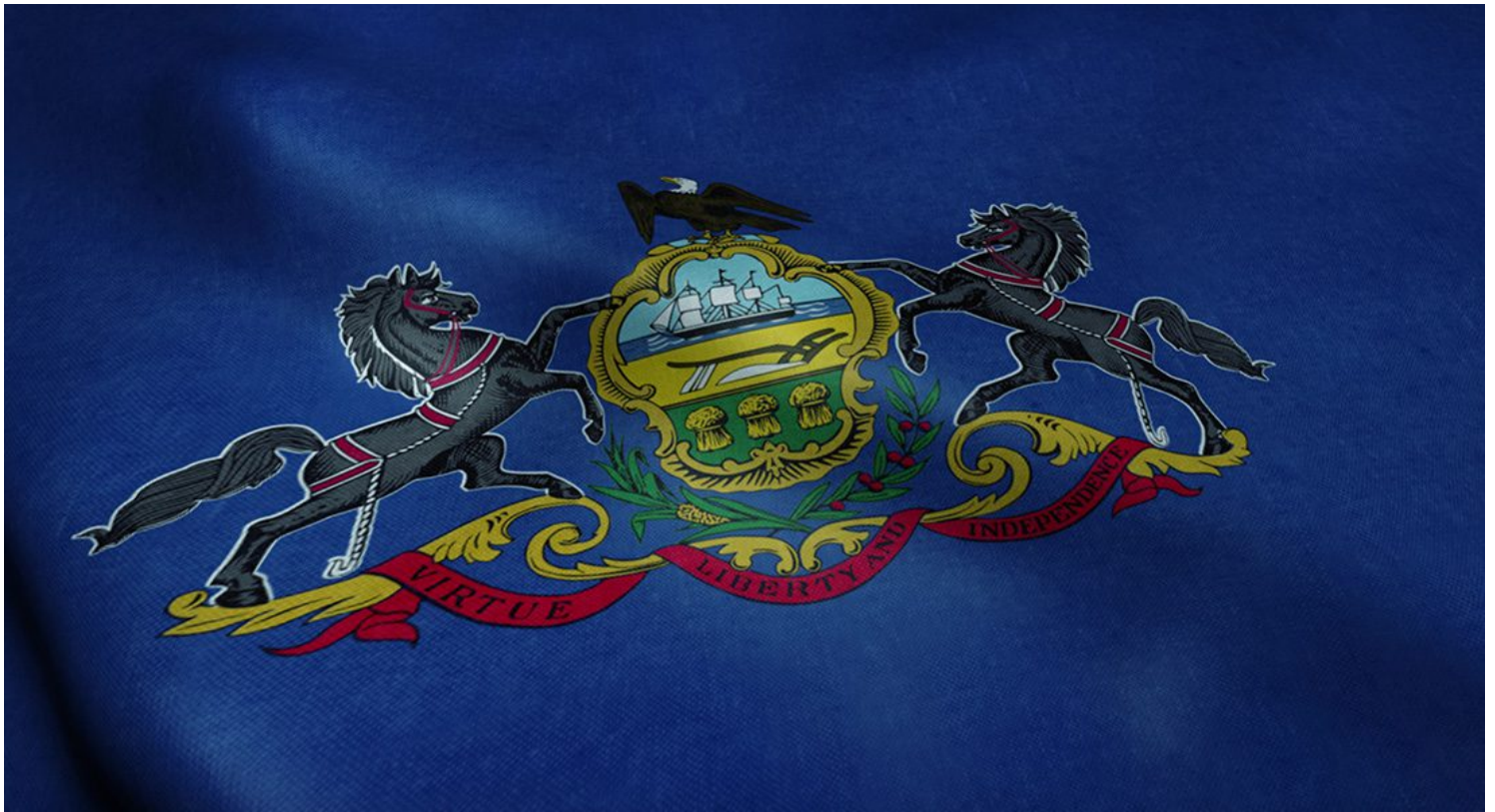


NEWS & INSIGHTS

PA Funeral Board approves regulations and doles out discipline

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Capping more than eight months of internal deliberations and discussions with stakeholders, the Pennsylvania State Board of Funeral Directors voted unanimously at its May 13 meeting to approve a [77-page overhaul](#) of its regulations.

The discussion at the meeting focused on advertising provisions and extending the time that a funeral home may hold a body without board permission from 10 days to 15 days. The overall changes update nearly 50 different sections of the board's regulations, including supervisor requirements, licensing of LLCs, and serving food on the funeral home premises.

With the board's approval, the changes will now initiate the formal regulatory review process, which includes being published for public comment and review by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Final approval could come later this year.

Disciplinary actions

The board also took three disciplinary actions. The board approved the revocation of Coy Thornton's funeral director license for aggravated assault and DUI convictions, arising from charges that Thornton fired multiple shots into a group of five people, including a 4-year-old boy, after being confronted about his drunk driving.

The board also approved a \$1,000 civil penalty against L. Beinhauer & Son Co. to resolve charges arising from a bizarre mix-up during a removal. The decedent died at a nursing home around 3 a.m. Shortly thereafter, her son contacted the funeral home to handle services. The funeral home engaged a well-known local removal service to transport the body from the nursing home to the funeral home. When the removal service employee arrived at the nursing home, he was directed to the decedent's room but was not accompanied there by staff. Unaware that the decedent's body was hidden behind a curtain, the employee removed the body of the decedent's alive, but unconscious, roommate. Upon arriving at the funeral home, the employee discovered the now-conscious roommate. While accepting the penalty, the funeral home asserted that the incident was caused primarily by the negligence of the nursing home, which failed to follow its own protocols for identification of decedents and failed to inform the removal company of the other, unconscious, occupant in the decedent's room.

Finally, the board suspended the funeral director license of John Henson for two years and imposed a \$1,000 fine. The discipline arose from Henson's guilty plea to third-degree felony charges of receiving stolen property. Henson, who was employed at a Pittsburgh funeral home, started a side-business providing videos and grave markers to funeral home customers. Henson was accused of fraudulently billing customers more than \$21,000 for items that were never provided. He pled guilty and was sentenced to seven years of probation and ordered to make restitution. Henson, whose father was a funeral director, and who had worked at funeral homes since he was 15 years old, expressed remorse for his actions and testified that he had begun making restitution and was hopeful that his criminal probation would be discharged early. A priest, another funeral director, and the owner of a vault company all testified to Henson's excellent work with families and that his actions were an anomaly. Henson asked for his license to be put on probation, but the board rejected this request, noting that the misconduct was related to the profession and resulted in harm to the funeral home and families.

If you have any questions about the Pennsylvania Funeral Board's regulations or disciplinary process, [please contact me](#) at any time.

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