

January 26, 2022

House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
Representative Thomas Stevens, Chair

Chris Palermo
Legislative Liaison for the Vermont Funeral Directors Association

The Vermont Funeral Directors Association has been following the progress of Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) since its pilot project began in the state of Washington. House Bill 244 sets the stage for NOR to become another choice for Vermonters as they consider their final disposition. The Vermont Funeral Directors Association supports this option.

As this discussion continues both in the Legislature and at the Office of Professional Regulation, I would like to offer some thoughts for consideration and would welcome the opportunity to be a part of the continued process. The following discussion points pertain to the legislation and regulation of this industry.

- 1.) H.244 proposes adding Natural Organic Reduction as a form of disposition by inserting the term and definition into current statute. Will there be a stand-alone bill that speaks to the specifics of how this form of disposition operates and is regulated, as was done in the three other states where it's permitted?
- 2.) Page 9 (#2) speaks to NOR remains being eligible for interment at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery (VVMC), including unclaimed veteran's remains if the Veteran qualifies. Following several discussions with Robert Burke, cemetery director with the Office of Veterans Affairs, he stated that VVMC is the only cemetery in Vermont that operates under an Act 250 permit because the cemetery sets upon an aquifer. This permit allows for only casketed bodies to be buried inground in a vault and cremated bodies to be buried in the earth, not scattered. There currently is no provision allowing for NOR remains in the cemetery.
- 3.) The Association recommends that consulting with State Epidemiologist, Dr. Patsy Kelso, and Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Elizabeth Bundock would be valuable. There may be certain causes of death not appropriate for NOR, such as Tuberculosis, Ebola virus, and prion diseases like Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.
- 4.) For clarity's sake, on page 4 (c), it appears that NOR is treated the same way cremation is when it comes to requiring a Medical Examiner Permit in the state of Vermont. This would include the same waiting period, clearance from the OCME and fee schedule of \$25. Our question is, does this pertain to only Vermont deaths or is this a requirement for deaths outside our state borders? If so, if other states do not recognize NOR as a

form of final disposition, how does their state Medical Examiner issue a cremation/NOR permit?

5.) Skeletal remains and teeth should be identified and processed to render them unidentifiable and returned to the compost material. All implants, such as pacemakers, defibrillators, dental implants, bridges, and orthopedic implants should be removed and recycled according to industry standards.

6.) For your consideration:

The State of Washington, through Washington State University, has done extensive testing and analysis of NOR. The below link provides an example of what the State of Washington requires: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-500-055>