

**HOUSE CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**HEARING ON SB 874**

**JANUARY 26, 2016**

**9:15AM**

**ROOM 140 – HOUSE MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM**

**HARRISBURG, PA**

**TESTIMONY**

**R. PAUL EVANS**

**VICE PRESIDENT & OWNER**

**EVANS BURIAL VAULTS, INC. (EBV)**

My name is R. Paul Evans and I am Vice President and Owner of Evans Burial Vaults, Inc. (EBV). EBV services the burial vault needs of over 120 funeral homes in central Pennsylvania, northern Maryland and northern Delaware and 2016 marks 100 years of business for our firm. We operate 4 burial vault plants located in Leola (Lancaster County), Schaefferstown (Lebanon County), Harrisburg, and Gettysburg, PA.

Prior to my current position, I worked for 15 years in the consulting/engineering field managing a wide range of projects. My educational background includes a B.S. in Geology from Dickinson College and a MS from the College of Engineering EPC program, the Pennsylvania State University.

The Burial Vault industry follows very specific standards and specification for the construction, delivery and installation of concrete burial vaults. These standards and specifications are provided by the National Concrete Burial Vault Association (NCBVA) as well as by the national burial vault franchises including Wilbert, Doric, Trigard, and Eagle. In general, these standards and specifications require that burial vaults are constructive with a 5,000 psi concrete mix with specific types of reinforcements including rebar, wire mesh, and polystyrene vault liners. Vaults are to be allowed to cure for a minimum of 28 days and then delivered to

cemeteries for burial. NCBVA provides a certification for vault companies which follow these industry standards.

At EBV we have learned that the best practice to ensure a high quality product is to follow the NCBVA manufacturing specifications and carefully rotate stock somewhere between 60 and 90 days. Vaults with polystyrene liners should be stored indoor to limit potential changes in temperature which can cause damage to the liners as they expand and contract.

When installing the vault, it is important to keep the box and lid as dry as possible and limit any soil material from impacting the seal area. The best way to properly seal a burial vault is to use a Wilbert Way above ground sealing system in which the box and lid are sealed above ground and then lowered together in the grave as a complete unit.

I am know going to present to you a slide show that demonstrates examples of how corporate cemeteries in this Commonwealth hold inventory pursuant to the practice of constructive delivery.

I see a number of problems with the concept of constructive delivery of burial vaults. First, concrete will deteriorate over time when exposed to changes in temperature (freeze and thaw) and acidic rain (concrete bridges, retaining walls,

etc. also deteriorate). Of particular concern would be the condition of any sealer material (i.e. rubber neck, etc). This material becomes very brittle over time when not stored in a moist and temperature controlled area resulting in poor vault sealing performance.

I am also aware that some cemeteries use a constructive delivery strategy where vaults are interred when purchased pre-need. Then at the time of need, the vault is exhumed and the cover is removed for burial. I also see problems with this strategy. When the cover is removed, the seal is broken which in most instances damages the tongue and grove sealing structure as well as any polymer liners. Also, from a practical perspective, it is impossible to keep soil material from interfering with seal when the cover is placed back on the vault. In most instances, the result is a damaged product that is full of water and mud. This would not result in a dignified manner of burial.

I support Senate Bill 874 because I don't believe that constructive delivery is consistent with industry standards and does not provide any benefits for consumers. I sincerely request that this bill be moved through to committee.