

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 1164 Session of 2020

INTRODUCED BY J. WARD, REGAN, MASTRIANO, PHILLIPS-HILL,  
SANTARSIERO, MENSCH, BROOKS, YAW, ARNOLD, LANGERHOLC, ARGALL,  
BAKER, STEFANO, PITTMAN, K. WARD, AUMENT AND DINNIMAN,  
MAY 25, 2020

REFERRED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MAY 25, 2020

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), entitled  
2 "An act relating to counties of the first, second class A,  
3 third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth classes;  
4 amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws  
5 relating thereto; relating to imposition of excise taxes by  
6 counties, including authorizing imposition of an excise tax  
7 on the rental of motor vehicles by counties of the first  
8 class; and providing for regional renaissance initiatives,"  
9 in coroner, further providing for coroner's investigation.

10 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
11 hereby enacts as follows:

12 Section 1. Section 1218-B of the act of August 9, 1955  
13 (P.L.323, No.130), known as The County Code, is amended to read:  
14 Section 1218-B. Coroner's investigation.

15 (a) Duty.--The [coroner having a view of the body] following  
16 are circumstances of death which shall be reported by persons  
17 having actual knowledge of the death, including a health care  
18 facility, personal care home or physician to the coroner, who  
19 shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning a death  
20 that appears to have happened within the county, notwithstanding

1 where the cause of the death may have occurred, for the purpose  
2 of determining whether or not an autopsy or inquest should be  
3 conducted in the following cases:

4 (1) A sudden death not caused by a readily recognizable  
5 disease or, if the cause of death cannot be properly  
6 certified, by a physician on the basis of prior recent  
7 medical attendance.

8 (2) A death occurring under suspicious circumstances,  
9 including if alcohol, a drug or another toxic substance may  
10 have had a direct bearing on the outcome.

11 (3) A death occurring as a result of violence or trauma,  
12 whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental,  
13 including, but not limited to, a death due to mechanical,  
14 thermal, chemical, electrical or radiational injury,  
15 drowning, cave-in or subsidence.

16 (4) A death in which trauma, chemical injury, drug  
17 overdose or reaction to a drug or medication or medical  
18 treatment was a primary or secondary, direct or indirect,  
19 contributory, aggravating or precipitating cause of death.

20 (5) A perioperative death in which the death is not  
21 readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.

22 (6) A death in which the body is unidentified or  
23 unclaimed.

24 (7) A death known or suspected to be due to contagious  
25 disease, including any disease constituting a health disaster  
26 emergency or pandemic, and constituting a public hazard.

27 (8) A death occurring in prison or a penal institution  
28 or while in the custody of the police.

29 (9) A death of an individual whose body is to be  
30 cremated, buried at sea or otherwise disposed of so as to be

1       unavailable for examination thereafter.

2           (10) A sudden and unexplained infant death.

3           (11) A stillbirth.

4       (b) Purpose.--The purpose of an investigation under  
5 subsection (a) shall be to determine:

6           (1) The cause and manner of the death.

7           (2) Whether or not there is sufficient reason for the  
8 coroner to believe that the death may have resulted from a  
9 criminal act or criminal neglect of a person other than the  
10 deceased.

11       (c) Requirements.--As part of an investigation under  
12 subsection (a), the coroner shall determine the identity of the  
13 deceased and notify the next of kin of the deceased.

14       (d) Data.--Where it is determined by the coroner of the  
15 county of death or residence of the deceased to be necessary,  
16 the individually identifiable health information that is  
17 maintained by State or local health authorities on disease,  
18 including any death certificate, shall be released to the  
19 coroner of the county where the death occurred at no charge and  
20 without the requirement for a subpoena. The coroner shall follow  
21 all applicable Federal and State laws, regulations and  
22 confidentiality standards.

23       Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.