

State of Arkansas  
92nd General Assembly  
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As Engrossed: H2/26/19  
**A Bill**

HOUSE BILL 1484

By: Representative Watson

By: Senator Flippo

### For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE PROCEDURE FOR DISPOSITION OF  
UNCLAIMED BODIES IN THE STATE OF ARKANSAS; AND FOR  
OTHER PURPOSES.

### Subtitle

TO CLARIFY THE PROCEDURE FOR DISPOSITION  
OF UNCLAIMED BODIES IN THE STATE OF  
ARKANSAS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code §§ 20-17-701 and 20-17-702 are amended to  
read as follows:

20-17-701. Definition – Rights of coroner, justice of the peace, or  
courts unaffected.

(a) As used in this subchapter:

(1) ~~“medical~~ Medical school” means a medical school or school of  
osteopathic medicine in this state that is:

~~(1)(A)~~ (A) Accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the  
United States Department of Education; or

~~(2)(B)~~ (B) Approved by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating  
Board to seek accreditation by an accrediting agency recognized by the United  
States Department of Education;

(2) “Next of kin” means a spouse, parent, child, sibling, or  
person otherwise authorized under § 20-17-702;

(3) “Unclaimed body” means a human body for which the next of



kin:

(A) Cannot be located; or

(B) Does not exercise his or her right of disposition

within the earlier of:

(i) Two (2) days of notification of the death of the

deceased; or

(ii) Five (5) days of the death of the deceased; and

(4) "Unclaimed remains" means the cremated remains of an

unclaimed body.

(b) ~~None of the provisions of this~~ This subchapter ~~shall~~ does not affect the right of a coroner ~~or a justice of the peace~~ to hold the dead body as described under § 20-17-703 for the purpose of investigating the cause of death, ~~nor shall this subchapter~~ or affect the right of any court of competent jurisdiction from entering an order affecting the disposition of the body.

20-17-702. Search for next of kin.

(a)(1)(A) The person who assumes original and lawful possession, charge, or control of any body as described in this subchapter shall conduct a diligent search for relatives or next of kin of the deceased, or that person shall request the county sheriff or such other person as may be required by law to conduct the search.

(B) The search shall be completed within five (5) days of the death of the deceased or the date of the request, whichever is later.

(2) The person conducting the search under subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall make every effort to find the spouse, if any, of the deceased.

(3) If the person conducting the search is not satisfied that the putative spouse is, in fact, a legal spouse, or it is determined that no spouse exists, then every effort shall be made to find the parents and siblings, if any, of the deceased.

(b) If the identity of the deceased is not known, the investigation shall include, ~~but not be limited to, the taking of fingerprints and sending the fingerprint records to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C., for identification and filing~~ without limitation submittal of the unidentified deceased to the State Crime Laboratory for forensic examination

and scientific identification that may include fingerprinting, dental examination, DNA analysis, and entry into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System database.

(c) If the deceased is eighteen (18) years of age or older, the person conducting the search shall conduct a diligent search with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to determine whether the deceased was a veteran under § 20-17-1403.

(d) If a relative or next of kin does not claim the body, a friend, a representative of a fraternal society of which the deceased was a member, a veterans service organization as defined in the Missing in America Project Act, § 20-17-1401 et seq., the Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, or a representative of a charitable or religious group may claim the body for burial or cremation at his or her expense as described in § 20-17-706(a)-(c).

(e)(1) If a party listed in subsection (d) of this section or a medical school does not claim the body, the person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body shall bury, cremate, or donate the unclaimed body within ten (10) days after the date of death.

(2) If the unclaimed body is cremated and a relative, next of kin, or other party described in subsection (d) of this section does not claim the unclaimed remains within five (5) days of cremation, person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body may dispose of the unclaimed remains in a manner permitted by law.

(3) If money is discovered on the unclaimed body, the person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body may use the money toward the disposition of the unclaimed body.

(4) If the deceased had an estate, the estate is responsible for reimbursing the person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body for all reasonable expenses incurred in relation to the disposition of the unclaimed body.

(5)(A) The coroner in the county where the unclaimed body is located may assume possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body and all obligations and benefits required of the person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body.

(B)(i) The person in possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body may petition the county court where the unclaimed body is

located for the county to take possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body.

(ii) The county court shall grant the county possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body upon a finding that the county is able to address the disposition of the unclaimed body and the county is the proper county for disposition of the unclaimed body.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 20-17-703(a), concerning notice of unclaimed bodies to medical schools, is amended to read as follows:

(a) Any person in charge of a prison, morgue, hospital, funeral parlor, or mortuary, any person who is a public officer, agent, or employee of the state, any county or municipality, and all persons coming into possession, charge, or control of any human body ~~which~~ that is unclaimed for burial ~~shall~~ may notify a medical school that the body, if unclaimed, is available for use in the advancement or study of medical science.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 20-17-704 is amended to read as follows:

20-17-704. Delivery to medical school.

Upon expiration of the forty-eight (48) hours as provided in § 20-17-703, if ~~the dead human body~~ a body of a deceased person has not been claimed for burial, the person then having possession, charge, or control of the unclaimed body shall surrender or deliver the unclaimed body to a medical school, ~~if so~~ if the unclaimed body has been offered to and requested by ~~it~~ the medical school.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 20-17-706(a), concerning the cost of embalming and transportation of an unclaimed body, is amended to read as follows:

(a) If a medical school is offered an unclaimed body and determines that there is a need for the unclaimed body, that the unclaimed body is suitable for anatomical science or study, and that the unclaimed body has not been embalmed, then the medical school, at its expense, shall immediately arrange for proper embalmment of the unclaimed body by a licensed embalmer, either with the person having possession, charge, or control ~~thereof~~ of the unclaimed body if the person is a licensed embalmer or licensed funeral director or with any other licensed embalmer or licensed funeral director.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 20-17-707 is amended to read as follows:  
20-17-707. Holding period for medical school.

(a) ~~The~~ A medical school shall cause any unclaimed body offered and accepted under this subchapter to be retained in a proper state of preservation for ~~ninety (90)~~ fifteen (15) days after the date the unclaimed body is received by ~~it~~ the medical school.

(b) During ~~this time~~ the time period under subsection (a) of this section a relative, a next of kin, a friend, a representative of a fraternal society of which the deceased was a member, a veterans service organization as defined in the Missing in America Project Act, § 20-17-1401 et seq., the Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, or a representative of a charitable or religious group may claim the unclaimed body for burial or cremation at his or her or its expense as stated in § 20-17-706(a)-(c).

(c) If a claim is made, the medical school shall be reimbursed by the claimant for the embalming fee and transportation charges that have been incurred by ~~it~~ the medical school in favor of the body claimed.

(d) If the unclaimed body is not claimed by any person or organization within ~~ninety (90)~~ fifteen (15) days from the date of arrival at the medical school, then all right, title, and interest in the unclaimed body shall be deemed to vest in the state for the benefit of the medical school, and any living relative, next of kin, friend, or organization shall be deemed to have consented irrevocably to use of the unclaimed body for the advancement or study of medical science.

*/s/Watson*

**APPROVED: 4/12/19**