

Good Law!

by Karen van Vuuren



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The law is a mechanism of protection, but it can also stymie change because it can be rooted in old paradigms. Here's a recent example I encountered.


A group of dynamic, changemakers seeks to open an eco funeral home. Green funeral establishments are popping up around the country as a few funeral industry daredevils and holistic death educators-turned-funeral-directors decide to revolutionize the funeral industry from within. Their vision is more than a funeral home: It is a resource center with other end-of-life complementary services, as well as green funeral care.

The funeral dynamos create a vision that pops. They begin the search for a place to locate their new business. Alas, the pickings are slim. Zoning restrictions reduce the number of properties that are appropriate for the new deathcare center. These zoning restrictions are predicated on a view of a funeral service provider who engages in polluting, resource-intensive practices, and whose presence in any neighborhood is undesirable.

Funeral homes used to be in the heart of towns and cities (and of course, before funeral homes existed, families cared for their own in the parlor). But now, zoners have relegated them to industrial areas - and with good reason.

The entrepreneurial dynamos find a spectacular property but subsequently learn it is incorrectly zoned for a funeral service business. They appeal to the town board, explaining their "green-ness," the beautiful, contemplative ambience they will create, and the educational programs they will offer as a resource to the town's residents and others. But the law prohibits a mortuary. So what's to be done? The town is known for its progressive stance. The board's members are keen on the vision for this innovative business, but their hands are tied. They can't allow this business to open because of zoning based on a paradigm that does not, in this case, apply.

This is not an uncommon scenario. I've heard from a number of progressive funeral directors who have encountered the same, often insurmountable obstacles.

In this issue of *NTM*, we look at how lawmakers unknowingly limit consumer choice in the name of consumer protection. We highlight the key areas of dissent between the pros and the cons in the debate about aid in dying (also known as physician-assisted death, depending on which side of the fence you are on). And we learn the facts about who really controls the body at death. Informing our readers and stimulating thoughtful debate, that's at the crux of *NTM*'s mission. Read on! 



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OUR VISION

- Acceptance of death, loss, and grief as a natural part of life

OUR MISSION

- To share holistic approaches to end of life
- To provide a forum for end-of-life caregivers and educators

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