

Burial opinion spurs few debates

Nearly a month after a state attorney general's opinion released counties from responsibility for the burial of indigent people, it appears that fewer problems have resulted than were expected.

Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer issued an opinion Dec. 13 stating that because of action by the 1985 state Legislature, neither the counties nor the state are responsible for burying indigent individuals who have died and of whom no relative can be located. And while counties are allowed to bury indigents, the opinion ruled that under existing law, no state agency may pay for such burials and that the legislative Emergency Board cannot appropriate money for burials.

"We believe the Legislature assumed that counties would appropriate money for indigent burials, but did not require them to do so," Frohnmayer wrote in a statement regarding the opinion. "I am personally offended that our legal system results in this ultimate indignity. The Legislature should address this inhumane situation at its earliest opportunity."

The opinion was expected to cause problems for county governments, which had little money to pay for indigent burials, and funeral homes, which would be unsure how to

deal with indigent deaths.

"There is no statewide policy for how counties should handle this," said Bill Walker, a food stamp administrator with the state Adult and Family Services and a former head of the indigent burial program. "Counties have been paying in different degrees. Even those that do have funds try to limit them to the least amount possible."

Before the Legislature's actions, Adult and Family Services paid for the majority of indigent burials.

Although several legislators have met to discuss the problem and formulate a plan for the 1987 session, little can be done immediately because the Emergency Board is barred from appropriating funds for the burials, Walker said. But while several problems have arisen, they have been few and all have been resolved, he said.

"It doesn't appear to be as traumatic as anticipated," Walker said.

Until further state action, Lane County will continue to pay for the cremation of indigents, said Frank Ratti, a Lane County deputy medical examiner. Only two or three people classified as indigents die in Lane County each year, which means the cost to the county is fairly small, he said.

Batiste

Continued from Page 8

development of the Centers of Excellence concept, and the development of the chancellor's and vice-chancellor's offices. He also is complementary of Chancellor William "Bud" Davis.

Batiste, 63, has been concerned with education and has been involved in public service for many years.

"As the father of nine children, I felt I had to become involved," he says. "I felt it was important to do something for my kids as well as other people's."

Indeed, he has done something for his children. All except one of his nine children have graduated from, or are in, college. Three of them attended the University.

In the early 1960s, his inspiration for getting involved came from national leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Even before that, he was involved with compensatory education — creating educa-

tional opportunities for the disadvantaged without bussing — in the early 1950s when it was even more controversial than it would later become.

"I grew up believing I could have an effect on my community," Batiste says.

He moved to Portland in 1947 to get a degree in chemical engineering at the University of Portland. Soon thereafter, he got a job with the Bonneville Power Administration where he worked as a chemical engineer until retiring in 1980.

He has long been involved in public service. He was a member of Portland's Model Cities Commission, the Commission to Establish Tri-Met, the Alberta Kerr Poverty Board and has been active on the Board of Catholic Charities and the Boy Scouts.

When Straub asked him to join the board, Batiste was reluctant to accept because of his lack of experience in higher education. But his experience in finance and business "put him in good stead to deal constructively with the issues of education," he says.

One issue that he is unhappy about is the board's handling of divestiture. He supports divestiture, which the board voted for in 1978, and believes the board should have hired independent counsel instead of relying on the state attorney general's office to represent its interests. The attorney general's office, the board's legal counsel, has been acting against board policy, Batiste says.

In addition, he says, the person who testified at the divestiture trial for the board took a position against divestment.

"How we wound up where we wound up, (being a defendant against divestiture) I just don't understand," he said. "It's a very uncomfortable position for the board to be in."

In looking over his tenure on the board, Batiste believes now is a good time to leave.

"The last eight years have been very tumultuous, but I feel the system is in better shape now," he says.

The first four years of his term on the board were a time of budget cuts, hopelessness and disappointment, he says. But the last four years have been a time of hope. For the first time since 1978, funding levels for salaries, buildings and high-technology are where they should be, Batiste says.

With progress in these areas, the board has been able to free its time to deal with internal issues such as the Centers of Excellence and affirmative action.

When his term is over, he is looking forward to traveling in California, Texas and Mexico.

By Gary Jimenez

**BEST WISHES
FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO**

**KEVIN DAVIS &
DONALD
PLUSQUELLIC**

**OF THE LAW FIRM OF COOK & DAVIS
AKRON, OHIO**

AND THEIR ASSOCIATE

TIMOTHY SHIMKO

**OF THE LAW FIRM OF
SPANGENBERG, SHIBLEY, TRACI & LANCIONE
CLEVELAND, OHIO**

(DON'T FORGET CASE NUMBER CV 85 4-1157)

RICHARD BRUCE WRIGHT, II

Recycle This Paper



Monday, January 13, 1986