



# Funeral Consumers

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ALLIANCE

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Protecting a consumer's right to choose meaningful, dignified, and affordable funerals since 1963

March 13, 2011

**SUPPORT – SENATE BILL 658**  
*requiring funeral homes to post price lists on their websites*

To the honorable members of the California Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee:

Funeral Consumers Alliance, the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit funeral consumer watchdog and advocacy group, enthusiastically supports SB 658. The bill---the first of its kind in the nation---would require funeral establishments to post their General Price Lists online if the business maintains a website. More than half-a-million people die in California each year. This simple, no-cost requirement would immediately help hundreds of thousands of California families more easily plan funerals that are meaningful and *affordable*.

Funeral Consumers Alliance's California membership alone numbers in the tens of thousands, and we have nine affiliated local educational organizations throughout the state. Our organizations conduct periodic price surveys to help the grieving public understand the vast difference in prices and services among funeral homes in order to help protect the bereaved from burdensome spending or exploitation. As you know, the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule requires funeral homes to give consumers printed price lists, but *only if they show up in person*. Our volunteers must frequently waste time and money traveling to dozens of establishments to collect this data as some funeral homes are secretive about their pricing. This is bad enough, but the situation is harder for a widow facing the most emotional and potentially one of the most costly transactions of her life.

In an era when online price and service comparison has overtaken most other methods of comparison shopping, the funeral business is an anachronism. Nationwide, the majority of funeral homes do not post their prices on their websites (if, indeed, they even have websites). Entrepreneurial funeral businesses have already seen the value of online price-disclosure; they recognize that consumers looking for funeral information online are interested in knowing how much it will all cost. Honest businesses know that an educated consumer is a happy consumer. Posting the price list on a website takes but a few mouse clicks. It costs next to nothing, and certainly less than ordering large numbers of printed price lists every time services or costs change. In addition to the convenience for funeral shoppers, there is an environmental benefit--a reduction in the use of fuel to visit the funeral home in person, and a savings on the paper to print price lists.

Funeral Consumers Alliance will be delighted to congratulate California on being the first state to bring funeral planning into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Passage of the bill will set a precedent that will spur change across the nation.

Respectfully yours,

Joshua Slocum  
Executive Director

co-author of the forthcoming book Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death. [www.finalrights.org](http://www.finalrights.org)