

Bill would help with funeral expenses

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JUNEAU—Grieving families in rural Alaska stuck with expense of embalming and caskets when autopsies are ordered on the bodies of their relatives could be reimbursed under a bill sent to the House on Thursday.

The measure (SB 382), sponsored by Sens. John Sackett, R-Ruby, and Frank Ferguson, D-Kotzebue, was approved 18

to 0 in the Senate.

"When public officials are unable to ascertain a cause of death, they send a report to a coroner," said Max Gifford, a legislative aide to Sackett.

"Usually they'll order an autopsy so a death certificate can be filed."

In many cases, that requires that the body be flown

to the nearest city, examined, then returned to the village, he said.

"If the courts are going to do that, fine," Gifford said.

"But don't hang a \$3,000 or \$4,000 bill on somebody."

Under the measure, a person unable to pay or who is otherwise unable to provide

clothing and a casket for the deceased would be eligible for financial assistance.

The bill carries a fiscal note of \$733,000 for fiscal 1985.