

From the MFDA Board

The MFDA continues its work on behalf of funeral professionals across Maine.

Right now, that work is clearly visible in Augusta. LD 562, which would update reimbursement rates for transports performed at the request of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, is once again before the Appropriations Committee. Despite passing unanimously through committee and both chambers multiple times, it continues to face challenges at Appropriations table where the Committee determines which bills receive funding.

At the federal level, efforts are underway to ensure veterans and their families are properly supported, as reflected in the proposed federal legislation from Senator Angus King to correct burial benefit disparities. (Story below)

This work is only possible with the support of our membership.

MFDA membership supports:

- Advocacy that requires follow-through across multiple legislative sessions
- A unified voice when the profession faces real operational challenges
- The ability to respond as demands on funeral service continue to grow

The Board also continues its long-range planning efforts to ensure the Association remains strong, stable, and focused on the needs of its members.

You will see continued communication in the months ahead, keeping you informed on both legislative progress and the broader work of the Association.

A strong profession requires a strong association. That does not happen by accident.

Thank you for your continued support.

— *The MFDA Board of Directors*

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In this issue:

- Legislative Update – Advocacy in Action
- Membership Corner
- News from NFDA
- Veterans Burial Benefits
- Educational Events
- Save the Date - MFDA Fall Fest

Legislative Update

Transportation Rate Bill – Advocacy Underway

The MFDA Legislative Committee is actively reaching out to members of the Appropriations Committee to secure support for the Transportation Rate Bill (LD 562), which has passed unanimously out of committee in both of the past two legislative sessions.

Reimbursement rates have not been updated since 2011, while the cost of providing this service continues to rise. Funeral homes across Maine are absorbing these costs to keep the system functioning.

As the bill advances, action at the Appropriations level is critical to ensure funding approval. Conversations are focused on helping lawmakers understand the operational and financial realities funeral homes face when providing transportation services across Maine.

If you have ANY connection with any of the following Appropriations Committee Members below, please [contact us](#).

- Sen. Margaret Rotundo - Androscoggin
- Sen. Susan Bernard - Aroostook
- Sen. Cameron Reny - Lincoln
- Rep. Amy Arata - Cumberland
- Rep. Mark Blier - York
- Rep. Michael Brennan - Cumberland
- Rep. Deqa Dhalac - Cumberland
- Rep. John Ducharme, III - Somerset
- Rep. Kenneth Fredette - Penobscot
- Rep. Drew Gattine - Cumberland
- Rep. Ann Matlack - Knox
- Rep. Ambureen Rana - Penobscot
- Rep. Holly Stover - Lincoln

Pre-Need Insurance Rulemaking – Status Update

The law allowing pre-need insurance has passed, but funeral establishments may not sell or advertise this option until technical rulemaking is completed by the Maine State Board of Funeral Service. MFDA continues to monitor the rulemaking timeline and will notify members when public comment periods are announced. There has been no change since last month's update.

Mortuary Trust / MaineCare Burial Exemption

No changes since last month's report. The burial contract exemption limit remains \$18,985 effective January 1, 2026 until 2027 where there will be an additional increase.

Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) Rulemaking

MFDA is still awaiting formal updates on the status of NOR rulemaking. We will communicate developments as soon as additional information becomes available.

Oklahoma has legislation to legalize human composting. If passed, Oklahoma would be the 15th state in the US that allows for human composting. [Read Article](#)

Learn more about Natural organic reduction from a recent podcast with Funeral Directors Life and Katrina Space, the Founder and CEO of Recompose see below or [Click Here](#)

Natural organic reduction

with Katrina S

The Director's
Playbook



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Funeral Directors Life

Homesteaders Announces Second Double-Digit Growth Increase

- Homesteaders Commits \$250 Million to Funeral Home Lending
- Homesteaders Partners with Gather on Case Management Integration
- Homesteaders Rolls Out New Funeral Home Rollers' Customer Service Program

Introduces Casket Price Protection Program

- Homesteaders Announces Free Child Support Response Fund
- Homesteaders Commits \$100,000 to Funeral Home Response Fund
- Homesteaders Introduces Free Families in Transition Aftercare Program
- Homesteaders Announces New PartnerPoints® Loyalty Program
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Timothy Smart, Chief Operating Officer, Co-Founder

Chris Sasso, Chief Development Officer

Stephen Lynch, Vice President of Finance

Brian Coffa, Vice President of Operations



NGL®

Member News

Welcome New MFDA Member



Daniela McLellan

I am a New England native spending most of my life in New Hampshire but enjoyed 10 years in Bridgton, Maine in the Veterinary field before relocating to Nashville, Tennessee for 4 years to attend mortuary school at John A. Gupton College, receive my degree, complete my apprenticeship, obtain my Tennessee Funeral Director and Embalmer License, and serve families there for an additional year. I always knew I wanted to come back to Maine and serve communities here. We moved back in September of 2024, I obtained my Maine Practitioners License, and I have been with Dolby, Blais & Segee ever since. Maine is so very special to myself and my husband, and it is truly an honor to meet new community members and work alongside compassionate and devoted funeral professionals.

Congratulations to long time MFDA member, Jim Pate on his Lifetime Achievement Award



Jim Pate pictured with family and friends at the Saco Lodge #9 Ladies at the Table. The 7-course dinner honored Past Master and Treasurer for over 25 years, James Pate with the MW Edward P. Burnham Award for Lifetime Achievement on March 7th. Jim and his wife Lisa, currently serving MFDA as Treasurer, own and operate Dennett, Craig and Pate Funeral Homes in Saco and Buxton

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An advertisement for Superior Parks Sales. At the top, it says 'INSPIRATION BEGINS HERE' in a large, white, serif font. Below that, in a smaller white font, it reads 'New & Pre-Owned Hearses, Limousines, First Call Vehicles, Flower Cars'. In the top right corner, it says '4 Generations of Serving Maine' and 'Michael C Nathan Parks'. The main image shows four hearses parked in front of a building. A logo for 'SUPERIOR PARKS SALES' is overlaid on the image, with 'EST. 1957' on either side. In the bottom left corner, there is a QR code with the word 'inventory' below it. At the bottom, a yellow banner contains the text 'Call Today 1-800-229-5008 - www.parkssuperior.com' followed by social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.



OUR SERVICES

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Crime Scene Cleanup
Homicide Cleanup
Suicide Cleanup
Decomposition
Unattended Death

Message from Dignified Cemetery Services

To Our Valued Clients:

Due to the rising Gas/Diesel Prices, we at Dignified Cemetery Services, unfortunately must institute a temporary Fuel Surcharge.

We hope that fuel prices will return to normal in the upcoming months, but until then we will implement a \$50.00 fuel surcharge for all vault orders, including urn vault delivery and cremation set-ups. If fuel prices continue to rise, we may have to revisit the surcharge and adjust accordingly.

This charge will go into effect as of April 1, 2026, until further notice.

All prepaid spring orders placed prior to this date will not be affected by this surcharge.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and hope this is just a temporary fee.

We thank you for your trust in our company, and we as always will continue to give you the excellent and "Dignified" service you have come to know.

Any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us at dignified77@gmail.com or at 603-738-3086.

Regards,

JENNIFER RUSSO

Jennifer Russo

Office Manager/Bookkeeper

Thank you to our Silver Sponsors:



From the NFDA

Invitation: Be Featured in a National Times Square Campaign Honoring Funeral Directors

NFDA is proud to support a new national public service announcement campaign, The First Call, led by Chaptr in collaboration with Homesteaders and Tribute Technology. This initiative will shine a national spotlight on funeral directors and the vital role you play in your communities.

On April 23, a national public service announcement campaign called “The First Call” will launch to spotlight funeral directors as the essential, community-first professionals you are. As part of this initiative, there will be a 15-minute full Times Square digital billboard takeover, featuring funeral directors from across the country.

The goal is simple but important: to help reshape how the public sees this profession by highlighting the compassion, professionalism, diversity and humanity that define your work every day.

This is expected to be the largest PSA-style campaign focused on funeral service in the last 30 years, and we would love to see you represented.

[Read More...](#)

PLAN TODAY. HONOR FOREVER.

KNOW YOUR BURIAL BENEFITS AT A VA NATIONAL CEMETERY

If you served in the military, you may be eligible for VA burial benefits. Burial services at VA national cemeteries are provided at no cost, helping you and your family save thousands of dollars.

-  **Burial site and burial of a casket or urn, perpetual care**
-  **Government headstone or marker**
-  **United States burial flag**
-  **Presidential Memorial Certificates**

Give your family peace of mind

If you or your spouse want to be buried in a VA national cemetery, you can apply to find out in advance if you are eligible. Complete VA's pre-need burial eligibility application today, a good starting point in end-of-life planning.



Learn more about your earned VA burial benefits and access the pre-need burial eligibility application
www.cem.va.gov/veterans-and-families



"This is one thing that I can do for myself that will help my family plan for the future."

Olivia Nunn,
U.S. Army Veteran



"It's important to us that even after our passing, our service will be honored and that our children will have a place to go to honor and remember us."

Juanita Pettersen,
U.S. Army Veteran

Share This Resource With the Veterans You Serve

Funeral directors play a critical role in helping veterans and their families understand and access the benefits they've earned, but many families are still unaware of what's available to them.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has created a helpful, easy-to-understand resource that you can use to start those conversations.

[Click Here to Download](#)

This flyer outlines key VA burial benefits, including:

- Burial in a VA national cemetery at no cost
- A government headstone or marker
- A United States burial flag
- Presidential Memorial Certificates

It also encourages veterans to complete the pre-need eligibility application, helping families plan ahead and avoid added stress during an already difficult time.

While this resource was shared in recognition of Women's History Month, the information is relevant year-round and can benefit any veteran and their family.

Put It to Work in Your Community

Consider:

- Sharing the flyer on your funeral home's social media channels
- Print and display the flyer in your funeral home
- Include the flyer in your preplanning materials
- Provide the flyer to families during arrangement conferences

Sometimes, the most valuable thing you can offer a family is clarity. This resource helps you do just that, ensuring veterans and their loved ones understand the benefits they've earned and the options available to them.

Thank you to our Bronze Sponsors:



Sen. King introduces new legislation to increase burial benefits for veterans who die in action

by Nicole Dauphinee of News Center Maine

MAINE, USA — Veterans who die from non-service-related causes currently receive more compensation than those who die in combat or as a result of their service, according to a spokesperson for Independent Sen. Angus King.

On Tuesday, March 17, U.S. Senators, Republican Jim Risch of Idaho and King, introduced a fix to the Veterans Burial Benefit Correction Act to address a discrepancy in funeral and burial benefits for veterans who die from service-connected disabilities.

In 2020, Congress passed legislation to increase burial benefits for non-service-connected deaths, linking them to inflation. This resulted in the benefit amount for deaths unrelated to service being higher than that for service-connected deaths, which remains capped at \$2,000, according to King's spokesperson.

The Veteran Burial Benefit Correction Act addresses this imbalance by increasing service-connected benefits from \$2,000 to \$3,000. It would align benefits with the same inflation adjustments as the non-service-connected benefit, according to the spokesperson.

“Veterans who die as a result of their service to our nation deserve to be honored appropriately, and their families deserve our full support,” King said. “Our Veteran Burial Benefit Correction Act corrects an unintended disparity between service and non-service-related deaths to even out the burial benefits for these veterans who served our country. On behalf of a grateful nation, it is the least we can do for these families.”

King has historically been an advocate for service members and veterans. In March, he was honored by The American Legion with its 2026 Distinguished Public Service Award.

Earlier this year, he introduced the TAP Promotion Act, which would allow accredited representatives from Veterans Service Organizations or other organizations to participate in TAP classes to help transitioning servicemembers file Benefits Delivery at Discharge claims.

He also introduced the Ensuring Benefits for Disabled Veterans Act, which would address an unfair rule in federal law that creates unnecessary delays when veterans with service-connected disabilities attempt to access earned education and employment benefits.

VA sets new record for customer satisfaction in memorial services

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration earned the highest customer satisfaction score ever achieved by any public or private organization measured by the American Customer Satisfaction Index, as part of the group's 2025 report.

[Read More...](#)

NFDA Educational Events

Strengthen Your Arrangement Skills From Anywhere

Arrangements are at the heart of meaningful funeral services, and NFDA's Virtual Arrangement Solutions Academy is designed to help you approach them with greater confidence, clarity and connection. Join us for one of two upcoming live, interactive training sessions in March and April. Led by NFDA trainer Lanae Strovers, the Academy brings together funeral professionals in a small-group setting to explore real-world strategies you can apply immediately. [Learn more and sign up today.](#)

Upcoming Events

Missed a recent NFDA Webinar? Check out recordings of select events [here.](#)

- Webinar: Marketing Funeral Homes: Balancing Sensitivity with Strategy, April 22, 2026 01:00 PM
- Webinar: Sowing Trust: Harvesting the Benefits of Authentic Consumer Engagement, May 20, 2026 01:00 PM
- Webinar: Annual FTC Funeral Rule Review, June 17, 2026 01:00 PM

Conferences & Events

- April 15-17, Advocacy Summit, Washington, D.C.
- May 4-8, Embalming & Restorative Art Seminar, Pittsburgh, PA
- May 6-9, Professional Women's Conference, St. Pete Beach, FL
- August 2-5, Leadership Conference, Louisville, KY
- October 25-28, NFDA International Convention & Expo, Charlotte, NC – registration opens June 2

Level Up Webinar Series – free for NFDA members and \$79 for nonmembers

- April 22, Marketing Funeral Homes: Balancing Sensitivity and Strategy

- May 20, Sowing Trust: Harvesting the Benefits of Authentic Consumer Engagement
- June 17, Annual FTC Funeral Rule Review

Digging In: A Deathcare Dialogue

Conversations will, take place 6-7 p.m. CT. [Click here](#) to sign up for free and join the conversation.

- April 23

NFDA Cremation Certification Program

- April 23-24, Virtual Program
- May 20, Detroit, MI

Find additional dates near you!

Earn cremation certification from the comfort of your home or office with our [online certification option](#).

NFDA Arranger Training

- April 6, 13, 20, 27, Arrangement Solutions Academy (Virtual)
- May 4, Wichita, KS

NFDA Certified Preplanning Consultant Program

Earn your CPC designation from the comfort of your workplace or home with our self-study option.

Other NFDA Events

Visit our events calendar, [NFDA.org/Events](https://www.nfda.org/Events)



Save the Date: 2026 MFDA Fall Fest

October 13–14, 2026

In 2026, the MFDA Fall Fest moves to the beautiful **Harraseeket Inn in Freeport** — a classic Maine setting that offers the perfect blend of education, connection, and a little well-earned relaxation.

Expect the same strong CEU programming, meaningful networking, and Scholarship Fund support you value — with a fresh backdrop and a few new touches we can't wait to share.

Freeport in October speaks for itself — crisp air, coastal views, and plenty to explore between sessions.

Schedule at a Glance

Tuesday, October 13

- MFDA Scholarship Fundraiser – Val Halla Golf Course (11:30am–6:30pm)
- MFDA Meet & Greet – Harraseeket Inn (7:00pm–11:00pm)

Wednesday, October 14

- MFDA Fall Fest Convention – Harraseeket Inn (7:30am–4:30pm)
- 6 CEUs
- Annual Member Meeting
- Networking, great food, raffles, and time with colleagues from across Maine

This event continues to strengthen our profession while supporting the students preparing to join it.

More details — including programming and registration — will be coming soon.

For now, mark your calendar.

You won't want to miss this one!

Make your reservations at the charming [Harraseeket Inn](#).

The group rate is \$209 plus tax. You can either call the Inn directly at 207-865-9377, press option 2 to speak with a Guest Service Representative OR use the link below:

[Harraseeket Inn Reservations: MFDA Fall Fest, October 12-14, 2026](#)

Lodging Cutoff Date is Monday, 9/14/2026



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