



Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 28, 2010

CONTACT:

Louis Pukelis — Office (312) 814-0778

Mobile (312) 415-4385

State Regulator names Cemetery Oversight Board

Appointed members charged with making Illinois cemeteries more accountable to consumers

CHICAGO – Five weeks after Governor Pat Quinn signed the Cemetery Oversight Act into law, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) announced today that Secretary Brent E. Adams has appointed a group of cemetery professionals and community activists to serve on the State’s first-ever Cemetery Oversight Board. A number of the safeguards signed into law by Governor Quinn take effect March 1, including protection from deceptive and unfair practices by the cemetery.

“These appointments represent a major step toward fulfilling Governor Quinn’s commitment to making Illinois cemeteries more accountable to consumers and to the State,” said Secretary Adams, who by law will serve as the board’s chairperson. “This new board is an integral part of a wider, more comprehensive regulatory framework enacted to protect families in their dealings with cemeteries, funeral directors, and embalmers.”

The creation of a nine-member Cemetery Oversight Board was a major component of the law that resulted from the many reforms and recommendations of the Cemetery Oversight Task Force. The Task Force was convened last summer in response to the tragedy at Burr Oak Cemetery in south suburban Alsip, Ill.

Board members who have been selected for appointment, effective tomorrow (March 1), include:

- **Willie E. Carter:** Mr. Carter was employed by Restvale Cemetery from 1958 until 1998, when he became owner of Restvale.
- **David B. Evans:** Mr. Evans has more than 30 years of experience in the cemetery industry. He is currently the Manager of three cemeteries including two in Illinois since 1999 – Valhalla Gardens of Memory and Funeral Home in Belleville and Lake View Memorial Gardens in Fairview Heights.

- **LuAnn Johnson:** Ms. Johnson has more than 20 years of experience in the cemetery industry and currently serves as Executive Director of Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. She is also the President of the Alliance of Illinois Cemeterians.
- **Zenobia Johnson-Black:** Ms. Johnson-Black is a retired activist and volunteer. She has more than 20 years experience as a senior level public administrator in urban policy, program development, intergovernmental and corporate relations, and community organizing.
- **Patrick Keenan-Devlin:** Mr. Keenan-Devlin has professional experience as a legislative director for Citizen Action/Illinois and as a health policy advocate with Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.
- **Roman F. Szabelski:** Mr. Szabelski has more than 30 years of experience in the cemetery industry and currently serves as Executive Director of Catholic Cemeteries, Archdiocese of Chicago. He was also appointed as Receiver of Burr Oak Cemetery.
- **Gregory Voge:** Mr. Voge has more than 40 years of experience in the cemetery industry. He currently serves as Manager of the Chippiannock Cemetery and Crematory, Calvary Cemetery, and Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery in Rock Island. He was appointed as Receiver of Rose Lawn Cemetery in Moline.
- **Antoinette D. Wright:** Ms. Wright most recently served as President/CEO and Arts Administrator of DuSable Museum of African American History.

The board's first business meeting will be held at 2 p.m. this Wednesday (March 3, 2010). The meeting will be conducted via video-conference in two locations: 320 W. Washington Street, Room 402F, Springfield, Illinois; and 100 W. Randolph Street, Room 9-375, Chicago, Illinois.

A brochure highlighting key consumer rights is available for free download at <http://www.idfpr.com/cemetery/cemeteryconsumerrights.pdf>. There are a number of other obligations that also take effect on March 1 for many of Illinois' cemeteries. An outlined list of these rules may be downloaded free at http://www.idfpr.com/FAQ/DPR/IDFPR_CO.asp.

###