

Anatomical Board, exhibition of dead bodies

Number: INFORMAL

Date: August 22, 2005

Mr. Lynn Romrell, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Anatomical Board
Post Office Box 100213
Gainesville, Florida 32610

Dear Dr. Romrell:

You have asked whether the approval of the anatomical board of Florida is required for an exhibition contemplated to open at the Tampa Museum of Science and Industry. The exhibition is entitled "BODIES: The Exhibition," and claims to utilize preserved human body specimens to educate those visiting the exhibition on the workings of the human body.

The anatomical board of Florida is located at the University of Florida Health Science Center and is statutorily recognized as an entity which has authority to regulate the disposition of certain dead bodies.[1] Under Part II, Chapter 406, Florida Statutes, the board is charged with determining the disposition of "any dead human body or remains which are unclaimed or which are required to be buried or cremated at public expense." [2] Section 406.61, Florida Statutes, provides in part that "[a]ny person, institution, or organization that conveys bodies or parts of bodies into or out of the state for medical education or research purposes shall notify the anatomical board of such intent and receive approval from the board."

You have specifically asked whether the board has the authority to approve a current human anatomy exhibition "BODIES: The Exhibition," proposed to be displayed in Florida. This exhibition purports to present preserved anatomical specimens which detail the structure and function of the human body. The exhibition claims to feature 20 body specimens, 260 organs and partial body specimens which provide a view of the skeletal, muscular, circulatory and respiratory systems.

"Educational relevance" is listed as one of the purposes of the exhibit in information obtained from the website of the exhibition and press releases focus on the "study and education" opportunities presented.[3] While I would note that section 406.61, Florida Statutes, does specifically refer to "medical education," it does not limit that education to medical students. Rather, this statute and Part II, Chapter 406, Florida Statutes, appear to deal more generally with medical and health-related purposes that require cadaveric material for study.[4]

In light of the language of section 406.61, Florida Statutes, authorizing the anatomical board to approve the conveyance of bodies or parts of bodies into or out of the state for medical education or research purposes and the stated purpose of the exhibition, "BODIES: The Exhibition" to provide educational information on the human body to those who may visit the exhibition, it is my opinion that the approval of the anatomical board of the State of Florida is required for such exhibition.

Sincerely,

Charlie Crist
Attorney General

CC/tgh

[1] See s. 406.50, Fla. Stat.

[2] *Id.*

[3] See www.bodiestheexhibition.com; <http://goflorida.about.com>, "World Premier of BODIES THE EXHIBITION, August 01, 2005; <http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>, 'BODIES ... The Exhibition' Makes its World Debut", July 26, 2005.

[4] See, e.g., s. 406.57, Fla. Stat., dealing with the distribution of dead bodies by the anatomical board.