

time that the amendment was requested by representatives of the Christian Science religion. I have worked with those representatives. They have shared with me information as far as on their code and some of their attitudes with regards to autopsies and investigations and so on, and developed language that at least is comfortable to me and acceptable to them that indicates that there will not be....and I just want to read, I guess it is best just to read the amendment probably. "Nothing in this section shall be construed to automatically require an autopsy in cases when the deceased was under the care of someone other than a licensed physician and in accordance with the tenets and practices of an organized religious denomination. Such cases"...and this is important..."such cases shall be investigated and autopsies may be performed if any other circumstances described in subdivisions 1 to 8 in this section are existing or suspected". What this says is, and it is on 1276 of the Journal, if you were to insert in the white copy request on page 7, what it says is, there will not automatically be an investigation or an autopsy. There will not automatically be an autopsy in the case where someone is unattended by a physician but is attended by someone with regards and who is in accordance with the tenets and practices of religious denomination...but if there are this types of circumstances that exist, that there is suspicion, that an autopsy may be conducted. Now it is interesting to note although this has been dubbed by some as the Christian Science amendment that in the State of New Mexico this was a concern, in that state there is a large native American population and there was a concern there about deaths again where there may not have been a physician present but there was a religious attendant. I would offer this amendment. I think that it does not thwart the intent of the bill. It still empowers the medical examiner if he identifies any of the other eight suspicious causes to conduct an autopsy, and, in fact, he can investigate those cases as well. This is a subissue within the whole question of the medical examiner. It would be an issue whether you had the county coroner's system you currently do, or the system as laid out here. I do think though it is a very important issue to several individuals. It borders on the question of religious freedom and as I indicated I am comfortable offering this amendment. I do not think that it lessens the power of the medical examiner.

SENATOR CLARK PRESIDING

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Nichol.