

Lansing dawdles on bills to protect cemetery trust funds

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Michigan cemetery trust funds are still in jeopardy, more than a year after Attorney General Mike Cox announced arrests in a "disgusting theft from the dead of Michigan."

Michigan's senators so far are uninterested in a bill introduced last year that would give the Michigan Cemetery Commissioner more power to conduct investigations into cemetery owners and cemetery sales.

Now that there are similar bills in the House, we would expect that somebody - anybody - in the Statehouse show more enthusiasm about protecting the money that grieving families put up for grave-site care, or money prepaid for burials.

Our burial grounds funds deserve more security than they have received so far in the state of Michigan.

In 2004, Oklahoma oilman Clayton Smart purchased 28 Michigan cemeteries, including Elm Lawn Cemetery in Bay City.

If anyone on the state level had been looking close enough, they would have seen \$70 million in trust funds change hands. Smart is suspected, but oddly, not yet charged, in dozens of embezzlement-related offenses regarding the trust funds.

One accomplice, Carter Green of Nevada, was convicted last year on one count of racketeering and three counts of uttering and publishing in this case.

They are accused of playing Michiganders as chumps, with our soft cemetery laws.

Clearly, Michigan needs stiffer regulations to guard the money meant for our dead.

So what's the holdup?

Get those cemetery trust fund bills rolling.

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