

THE BOOK THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY DOESN'T WANT YOU TO READ

Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death

Final Rights is the definitive book on the modern funeral industry. Written by national FCA executive director Josh Slocum and Funeral Ethics Organization leader Lisa Carlson, ***Final Rights*** combines journalistic investigation with practical consumer advice. The only book of its kind, ***Final Rights*** unveils the tricks of the funeral trade (and how to avoid them) while calling out government regulators who dance to the \$15-billion death industry's tune when they're supposed to be protecting you, the funeral consumer.

Jessica Mitford's classic exposé, *The American Way of Death*, drew back the curtain on the funeral industry's excess. ***Final Rights*** investigates the \$15-billion funeral and burial industry in 2011, exposing consumer abuse, financial exploitation of the bereaved, and how government regulators can't be counted on to protect the grieving.

- In eight states the law says you have to hire a funeral home, even if you want to care for deceased relative privately.
- Almost \$1 billion has been stolen from trust funds and insurance policies families paid for to ensure their last wishes were carried out. Where were the regulators?
- Interested in a formaldehyde-free funeral? Better be careful, as the conventional burial industry is finding creative ways to make your green send-off as pricey as possible.
- The Federal Trade Commission gives you specific protections when you buy from a funeral home, but they disappear when you

get to the graveyard. Find out why, and how to watch your wallet at the graveside.

Final Rights takes on these topics and more, offering consumers a roadmap to help themselves find a funeral that fits their needs and their budget. The only book of its kind, ***Final Rights*** includes a chapter on the laws in each state, written in plain English, with suggestions for needed reforms.

Here's what *Library Journal* had to say:

Slocum (executive director, Funeral Consumers Alliance) and Carlson (executive director, Funeral Ethics Organization) offer a guide intended to prepare consumers to deal with what the authors claim is a deceptive and greedy funeral services industry. They look at the components of burying the dead, including choosing caskets and markers, dealing with cemeteries and funeral homes, understanding pre-need funeral purchases, and new and revived trends such as home funerals and green funerals. They offer numerous real-life examples of manipulation and questionable practices and provide tips for consumers to help avoid rip-offs, such as misleading perpetual-care arrangements and exorbitant embalming costs. There is practical advice on filing a complaint when wronged by the industry and a cautionary chapter on the Federal Trade Commission and what the authors see as its failure to enforce its own consumer protection rules. VERDICT This book is a boon for those looking to simplify and personalize caring for the dead. The inclusion of a compilation of each state's funeral laws, including statutory citations and guidance for those investigating home funerals and burials and body donation, make this an essential purchase for consumer-protection collections.—Joan Pedzich, Harris Beach PLLC, Rochester, NY

We have it in our library for you to peruse, or you can order copies directly from the national FCA. [***Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death***](#), Josh Slocum and Lisa Carlson. 512 pages, Upper Access Publishing. \$19.95 (with shipping included, total \$22.50).

Curious? Read the first chapter, [***Circling the Hearses***](#), free!