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What it Costs to Die.

Funerals have become a luxury that many Americans can't afford. Local governments are paying the price.

Jimmy Pollard knew his state had a serious problem surrounding death. As the coroner for Henry County and a consultant for the Kentucky Coroners Association, Pollard had seen lots of instances in which family members couldn't afford to bury or cremate a loved one. But the problem of "funeral poverty" was getting worse.

Pollard realized just how bad things had gotten when, a few years ago, the county judge approached him and said, "I'm out of money for indigent burials this year, and I've got six months left to go."

Despite pleas from the judge and from Pollard, neither the state nor the county has invested more money for burials. "I tried to talk to the state judges' association," says Pollard, "but I could tell it didn't really soak in. More money would help, but right now is a bad time to ask for more money in Kentucky for anything, because it's just not there."

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BY LIZ FARMER, MATTIE QUINN | JUNE 2019

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