

STATE OF NEW YORK

7782

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

May 6, 2025

Introduced by Sen. SKOUFIS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to requiring the department of health to enter into a contract for the digitalization and indexing of certain vital records

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The public health law is amended by adding a new section
2 4180 to read as follows:

3 § 4180. Vital records digitalization. 1. For the purposes of this
4 section, the term:

5 (a) "vital records index" or "index" shall mean a systematically
6 organized listing, compilation, or database derived from original vital
7 records maintained by the state local registrars, including but not
8 limited to vital records relating to birth, death, marriage, and dissol-
9 ution of marriage, which includes at a minimum, the names of any regis-
10 trants, the date and location of the event's registration, and any
11 assigned identifying reference numbers.

12 (b) "qualified entity" shall mean a natural person, firm, organiza-
13 tion, partnership, association, corporation, or any other entity experi-
14 enced in maintaining genealogical research databases.

15 2. The department shall enter into a long-term contract with a quali-
16 fied entity to create, maintain, and update an online genealogical
17 research database of images of New York state birth, marriage, dissol-
18 ution of marriage, and death certificates at no direct cost to the
19 state, in exchange for allowing the qualified entity to also provide
20 such database to its subscribers and customers. Such online database
21 shall be designed and constructed to have the capability of allowing a
22 vital records index of birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, and
23 death certificates to be linked to a digital image of the underlying
24 original birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death record once

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 any such underlying record has become public information under section
2 forty-one hundred seventy-four of this title, and the online genealogi-
3 cal research database shall be designed to allow the department to
4 create and activate such links to digital images of the original
5 records. Any social security numbers appearing on such records shall be
6 redacted from the digital images provided to the public, which may
7 include bulk redaction of social security fields from the images via
8 automated methods. Such indexes shall be a public record and subject to
9 the state freedom of information law under article six of the public
10 officers law.

11 § 2. Subdivision 3 of section 4174 of the public health law, as
12 amended by section 2 of part W-2 of chapter 62 of the laws of 2003, is
13 amended to read as follows:

14 3. (a) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of law, the commissioner
15 shall have the authority to determine the means and methods by which the
16 following genealogical records shall be released to an applicant meeting
17 the qualifications to receive the relevant record type as described in
18 this section or in article three of the domestic relations law: (a) a
19 record of birth that has been on file for at least seventy-five years;
20 (b) a record of marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death that has
21 been on file for at least fifty years; or (c) any record of birth,
22 marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death for which the requester is a
23 lineal or collateral descendant.

24 (b) For any search of the files and records conducted for authorized
25 genealogical or research purposes, the commissioner or any person
26 authorized by ~~him~~ the commissioner shall be entitled to, and the
27 applicant shall pay, a fee of twenty dollars for each hour or fractional
28 part of an hour of time of search, together with a fee of two dollars
29 for each uncertified copy or abstract of such record requested by the
30 applicant or for a certification that a search discloses no record.

31 § 3. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a
32 law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any
33 rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its
34 effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such
35 effective date.