



1212 New York Ave. N.W.  
Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005  
202.525.5717

*Free markets. Real solutions.*  
[www.rstreet.org](http://www.rstreet.org)

Hon. Edmund G. Brown Jr.  
State Capitol, Office of the Governor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: In Support of Senate Bill 1303 (Pan)

Dear Governor Brown:

The R Street Institute urges support for SB 1303 and respectfully requests your signature on the measure. R Street is a Washington, D.C.-based think-tank with offices in Sacramento that focuses on individual liberty and free market issues, including criminal justice reform.

SB 1303 addresses a problem plaguing the county coroner system. The current system creates a disturbing conflict of interest because sheriffs — who have a vested interest in many of these cases, especially those stemming from officer-involved shootings — make final cause-of-death determinations. The scandal in San Joaquin County last year illustrates the significance of the problem.

Unless it already has one, SB 1303 would replace the county coroner in certain counties with an independent medical examiner. If a county chooses not to create a medical examiner's office, it would be required to refer autopsies to other counties or to outside investigators for four specific classes of individuals in order to limit potential conflicts of interest. The law would apply to non-charter counties with populations over 500,000, meaning that it would affect six counties: Contra Costa, Kern, Riverside, San Joaquin, Sonoma and Stanislaus.

Because autopsies often form the basis for criminal charges, it's vital that the decisions are based on science, not politics. We strongly urge you to sign SB 1303, which helps fix a serious problem.

Sincerely,

Steven Greenhut  
Western Regional Director