

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FUNERAL TRUST RECEIVER ANNOUNCES 100 PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN SETTLEMENT

Every funeral home signs agreement that will protect consumers

MADISON, Wis. – John Wirth, a Milwaukee attorney and the court-appointed Receiver of the Wisconsin Funeral Trust, today announced that the Trust has reached a settlement agreement with every funeral home that was participating in the Wisconsin Funeral Trust. Wirth was appointed as Receiver of the Trust after a Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions investigation discovered a shortfall of at least \$21 million in the Trust. The actual amount of the shortfall was later determined to exceed \$24 million.

“Having each and every funeral home that was involved in the Wisconsin Funeral Trust participate in this settlement agreement is a great win for Wisconsin consumers,” Wirth said. “Funeral homes stepped up and did the right thing, and they are to be congratulated for it. Rather than hiding behind lawyers and avoiding their responsibilities to their customers, every funeral home that participated in the Wisconsin Funeral Trust has agreed to ensure that all consumers with funds in the Trust will receive the benefits and services they were promised. This result protects consumers now and into the future, and I am pleased with the results.”

The leader of the state agency whose work uncovered the shortfall in the Wisconsin Funeral Trust applauded the development. “This is great news for the thousands of people who invested in the Trust,” said Peter Bildsten, secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. “Thanks to the efforts of Receiver John Wirth and his team – and the willingness of the respective funeral homes to step up to the plate – Wisconsin consumers have been made whole.”

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FUNERAL TRUST RECEIVER ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT / ADD ONE

Wirth noted that his team entered into 167 separate agreements with 180 funeral homes that covered 10,827 active contracts exceeding \$67 million in value. Dane County Judge Peter C. Anderson approved the form of the agreements on July 8, 2013.

Wirth commented that none of the funeral homes were required to enter into the agreement, and he praised them for “taking care of their customers and meeting their obligations.”

Wirth said funeral homes had until September 30 to enter into the agreement with the Receiver.

“Achieving 100 percent participation was a gargantuan effort,” Wirth said. “The strong team of people this office assembled helped get the job done. The extra efforts of Fiduciary Partners and attorneys Steve Kravit and C.J. Krawczyk made a meaningful difference. Many of the funeral directors also worked hard to achieve this goal, particularly Mark Jelacic of Jelacic Funeral Home, Inc. in Milwaukee. Their combined efforts to explain the settlement, make telephone calls and attend meetings were a tremendous help.”

Wirth noted that while the settlement achieves the State’s primary goal of protecting consumers, full compliance does not end the Receiver’s responsibilities. Wirth said he will ask the Court in the near future to approve a more responsible investment policy to protect funeral homes and consumers. He added that his team of attorneys would continue its efforts to collect losses from those responsible for the Trust’s shortfalls. Wirth added that he also will suggest a comprehensive oversight and governance plan for the future of the Trust “so that this never happens again.”