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**Protecting a consumer's right to choose meaningful, dignified, and affordable funerals since 1963**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Congress Introduces Historic Legislation to Protect Bereaved Families From Fraud**  
National Consumer Organization Endorses Bill

*South Burlington, VT*— Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA) is pleased to support The Bereaved Consumer's Bill of Rights Act of 2009, introduced as HR 3655 by Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL). The bill sets national standards for the protection of funeral and cemetery consumers — a goal FCA's federation of nonprofit consumer education groups has been striving for since the 1970s. The Act will direct the Federal Trade Commission to strengthen and expand the Funeral Rule, which currently applies only to funeral homes, but not cemeteries. The Bill requires the FTC to enact rules that will:

- Compel cemeteries to give consumers accurate prices before the sale
- Give cemetery consumers the right to buy only the goods and services they want; families will be able to buy markers, monuments, or grave vaults from less expensive retail vendors rather than being captive to the cemetery's prices
- Bar cemeteries from forcing families to buy entire packages of goods or services, if the family wants to choose item by item
- Require cemeteries to disclose rules and regulations, and consumer rights, before the purchase
- Require cemeteries to keep accurate records of all burials sold, and where remains are interred, and to make those records available to regulators
- Bar cemeteries from lying about the law - claiming state laws "require" vaults to surround an in-ground casket, for example

"When a friend or relative dies, families are in shock, they're confused about their options, and they're vulnerable to misinformation and high-pressure sales pitches," said FCA executive director Joshua Slocum. "The FTC Funeral Rule has helped correct some of these problems, but only when families are at the funeral home. Rep. Rush's bill extends those protections through the whole funeral transaction."

The bill will also require retail monument dealers and casket-sellers to offer accurate price information to consumers and refrain from misrepresenting legal requirements.

The Bereaved Consumer's Protection Act grew out of a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Consumer Protection on July 27, after the discovery that 300 graves may have been dug up and resold at Chicago's historic Burr Oak Cemetery. FCA executive director Joshua Slocum testified before lawmakers, urging them to take a broader look at an industry riddled with deceptive practices that take advantage of vulnerable families. While heart-wrenching scandals like Burr Oak grab headlines, he said, many ongoing abuses of funeral and cemetery consumers never make the news and get swept under the rug. FCA offered Congressional staff comments on what provisions the bill should include, and we're very pleased with the final product.

**About FCA:** Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., is a nonprofit federation of nearly 100 local organizations that educate the public about sensible funeral planning and stand guard against exploitation of grieving consumers. Founded in 1963, the federation helped push for the successful enactment of the FTC Funeral Rule in 1982, the first national regulations to curb funeral industry abuses. For more information or interviews, contact executive director Joshua Slocum at 802-865-8300, by cell phone at 802-233-6326, or at [fca@funerals.org](mailto:fca@funerals.org).