

Did You Know: Capitol Hill Hosts the Largest Funeral Co-op in the US



You've heard of a food co-op, obviously, and probably co-ops that provide electricity, housing and services for farmers. But did you know there are funeral co-ops, and that the largest one in the nation is right near our Seattle store? It's true! It's called **People's Memorial Association** (<https://peoplesmemorial.org/>) (PMA), and it's been helping people be empowered consumers of funeral services for 80 years!

Founded in 1939 amidst the Depression-era cooperative boom, PMA was the product of outrage at the high price and high-pressure sales tactics of the funeral industry. Often the entire membership of a church would join at the same time, drawn by the lower prices that the co-op had negotiated with funeral homes. Membership soared in the 1960s, partially due to the consciousness raised by Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death*. PMA joined together with 70 other memorial associations in 1962 to form the **Funeral Consumers Alliance** (<https://funerals.org/>) as a unifying force on the federal level.

Due to the rapid consolidation in the funeral home industry, in 2007 PMA members voted to open their own cooperative funeral home on Capitol Hill: The Co-op Funeral Home of People's Memorial. Anyone can use the Co-op Funeral Home, with members receiving discounted prices. The Co-op Funeral Home is focused on quality of care, with transparent billing and no high-pressure sales tactics.

PMA has also been a voice for policy change in the funeral industry, playing a key role in legislation legalizing the scattering of ashes, protecting the rights of families to care for their own dead, and advocating for religious and cultural minorities to be able to perform rituals with unembalmed bodies. Currently, they are backing a bill in the state legislature which would allow recomposition (composting) and alkaline hydrolysis, new techniques with much better environmental impacts than cremation or burial. If the legislation passes as expected, Seattle could soon be the first city in the nation with a **recomposition facility** (<https://www.recompose.life/>)!

Joining PMA is as simple as paying the \$50 membership fee. The co-op strives to remove the guilt that often accompanies the grief of losing a loved one by helping members be prepared. Members receive tools for funeral planning and for having conversations with family members about this often-difficult topic, and the comfort that their family will be in good hands when the time comes.

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<http://strongertogether.coop/food-coops/co-op-difference/>

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206.329.1545

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