



# The Washington Post

## Worker Fired For Describing Conditions at Funeral Home

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By Josh White  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Tuesday, July 7, 2009

A National Funeral Home employee who publicly supported allegations that the company was mishandling bodies at its Falls Church facility was fired last week for speaking to the media, he and his attorney said.

Robert Ranghelli, 20, of Manassas Park was put on administrative leave three months ago after he spoke to The Washington Post and other media outlets about what he considered disgraceful conditions at the funeral home. After The Post revealed the conditions in an article April 5, Ranghelli corroborated another former employee's claims, saying he regularly saw decomposing bodies left in the garage and back rooms of National, a regional embalming and storage facility for Service Corporation International.

Ranghelli was fired Wednesday morning, when SCI officials told him to report to work. They immediately informed him that he had violated company policies by speaking to the media and appearing with a company van in a Post photograph. It was the same day SCI officials publicly denied that the conditions existed and argued in letters to a Virginia regulatory board that an internal investigation turned up no evidence to support the allegations.

"I grew up on morals, and I have ethics and I have integrity and dignity," said Ranghelli, who became a father last month when his son, Dimitri, was born and was the sole wage earner for his family. "As soon as The Post story came out, I saw that they were trying to cover up what they did. I feel they got rid of me because I would have still been in there telling them what had really happened."

An SCI spokeswoman confirmed that Ranghelli was terminated but would not comment further because the company does not publicly discuss personnel matters. SCI officials also have declined to release the results of their internal investigation, which they say clears them of any wrongdoing.

David Colapinto, an attorney for Ranghelli, said he is considering filing a whistleblower lawsuit. He also said Ranghelli cooperated with SCI's internal probe, speaking with investigators for more than five hours during two meetings. In those interviews, Ranghelli reported numerous problems at the funeral home and fully backed the claims of Steven Napper, who worked as an embalmer at National Funeral Home and publicly exposed the conditions there, Colapinto said.

"This is a coverup and a whitewash," Colapinto said. "Their concern is to send a message to their workforce: 'Don't disclose information, or you'll end up like Robert Ranghelli.' They want to instill a chilling effect on their workforce."

The Virginia Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers is investigating the allegations, and state officials have proposed new regulations that would require funeral homes to embalm or refrigerate bodies shortly after receiving them. Among other allegations, Ranghelli and Napper said that

unembalmed bodies awaiting cremation were left to decompose in unrefrigerated areas of the funeral home and that bodies of military veterans awaiting burial at Arlington National Cemetery were stored for months on racks in the garage.

SCI has defended the practice, saying Virginia has no law or regulation that requires bodies to be refrigerated, adding that National Funeral Home has stored bodies in the garage and will keep such storage an option in the future.

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