



funeral service **insider**
independent news & guidance for funeral home owners and operators

Dear Subscriber:

Our most recent article about the woes of the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association's Preneed Trust struck a nerve with Fiduciary Partners.

On Sept. 14, regulators in Wisconsin sued the WFDA as well as Fiduciary Partners, trustee of the association's preneed trust. The trust has an estimated shortfall of \$21 million, and a receiver was appointed to take over the trust.

Fiduciary Partners, which also does business with the Illinois Funeral Directors Association and its preneed trust, says that contrary to some published reports, it was never involved in making investment decisions for the WFDA. It has asked a Wisconsin court to dismiss actions against the firm.

In a statement, Fiduciary Partners explains what it says was its role in connection with the WFDA:

Fiduciary Partners is an independent private trust company that does not manage investments.

Our role for the Wisconsin funeral Directors Association's (WFDA) trust has been to take in new funeral contracts provided by funeral directors and deposit the funds into the master trust account. When a death occurs, Fiduciary Partners coordinates payment to the funeral director, in accordance with procedures established by WFDA.

Fiduciary Partners is not, and never has been, involved in deciding how any funds are invested on behalf of the WFDA trust, or in marketing the trust to funeral directors and consumers. Those are and always have been responsibilities of WFDA and the investment management firms it has hired.

We are cooperating with the Receiver, and we share his goal that it be an open and transparent process.

From the inception of the trust to the date the Receiver was appointed, no consumer or funeral director received less than promised from the trust. Our goal is that there be no harm to funeral directors and consumers.

We will continue to work with the receiver in accomplishing that.

Peter A. Rogers, president of the Appleton, Wis.-based Fiduciary Partners, stated in an email that his firm is also not involved in managing investments for the Illinois association. “While we are proud of our role in Futura Funeral Trust of Illinois, we are not the investment advisor,” he says.

The role Fiduciary Partners played in regards to Wisconsin’s Preneed Trust remains under investigation; we’ll keep you updated on any developments. Send any comments to tparmalee@katesboylston.com.

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