

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6055

As Reported By House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to counties.

Brief Description: Making the minimum salary for county coroners consistent with the salaries of other full time county officials.

Sponsors: Senators Loveland and Winsley.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, February 25, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives H. Myers, Chair; Springer, Vice Chair; Edmondson, Ranking Minority Member; Reams, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee; R. Fisher; Horn; Moak; Rayburn and Zellinsky.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Van Luven.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: Prior to the approval of Amendment 57 to the state constitution in 1972, annual salaries for elected county officials in noncharter counties were established in state legislation. The Legislature was authorized to classify counties by population and provide for different salaries in each classification. The state pays one-half the annual salary of each county prosecuting attorney.

Amendment 57 to the state constitution allowed the Legislature to delegate to each county the authority to set annual salaries for county elected officials. Legislation was enacted delegating this authority, but establishing the then statutory salaries as the minimum annual salaries that could be provided.

Counties are authorized to establish bi-weekly pay periods for county employees and to pay their compensation up to seven days following the end of each pay period. King

County recently assumed Seattle Metro which had established a bi-weekly pay period for its employees and paid compensation 13 days following the end of each pay period.

At the request of the person who leaves a document with a county auditor to be recorded, the auditor returns the endorsed document to either that person or that person's "order."

The director of public health of a combined city-county health department is appointed by action of the county executive and city mayor to a term of office of four years.

Summary of Amended Bill: The minimum annual salaries for the office of coroner are increased in several classifications of noncharter counties as follows:

- o From \$16,500 to \$17,600 in counties with populations of from 210,000 to less than one million;
- o From \$8,800 to \$16,000 in counties with populations of from 125,000 to less than 210,000;
- o From \$5,500 to \$14,900 in counties with populations of from 70,000 to less than 125,000; and
- o From \$4,000 to \$13,800 in counties with populations of from 40,000 to less than 70,000.

These salary minimums are the same as provided in statute for the offices of auditor, assessor, treasurer and clerk in counties with these populations. This statute is repealed on January 1, 1996, and a new statute becomes effective continuing the authorization for each county legislative authority to set salaries for that county's elected officials and continuing the requirement that the state pay half the salary of every county prosecutor.

A county that has assumed a metropolitan municipal corporation may establish a bi-weekly pay period for its employees and pay compensation up to 13 days following the end of each pay period.

At the request of the person who delivers a document to a county auditor for endorsement and recording, and at the county auditor's discretion, the auditor may return the document to either that person or that person's designees.

The director of public health of a combined city-county health department is appointed without having a specific term of office.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Minimum annual salaries for county elected offices are eliminated on January 1, 1996. Provisions were added relating to county pay periods, returning documents that have been endorsed and recorded, and appointing the public health director of a combined city-county health department.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: At times, county commissioners use an excuse for denying coroners higher rates of pay equal to other county officials that the old law setting salaries provided coroners with lower salaries than other county officials.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Fred Saeger, Washington Association of County Officials; and Sharyn Parker, Metro King County.