
HOUSE BILL 2094

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Dufault, Corry, Schmidt, Leavitt, Walen, Bronoske, Wylie, Graham, Salahuddin, and Bernbaum

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1 AN ACT Relating to saving taxpayer money by requiring coroners to
2 be appointed rather than elected; amending RCW 36.16.030, 43.101.480,
3 36.16.050, 36.17.020, and 36.24.205; creating a new section; and
4 declaring an emergency.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that county coroners
7 occupy positions of significant public importance. By investigating
8 unexpected deaths, coroners provide important public safety and
9 public health services. Technical skill, and medical and legal
10 investigative abilities are critical to perform this function.
11 Coroner is not a political position, yet most counties are required
12 to hold coroner elections.

13 Many coroners or medical examiners in the state are already
14 appointed and serving successfully. Counties with less than 40,000
15 may appoint a coroner in lieu of electing a coroner, while those with
16 more than 250,000 may appoint a medical examiner. Having all
17 counties, including those in between those thresholds, appoint rather
18 than elect a coroner will reduce taxpayer costs by removing an
19 unnecessary elected office. Therefore, in order to better steward
20 public funds, the legislature finds that coroners throughout the
21 state should be appointed rather than elected.

1 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.16.030 and 2021 c 127 s 4 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county
4 there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county
5 a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, ((a county
6 coroner,)) three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney,
7 a county sheriff, and a county treasurer((, except that in each
8 county with a population of less than forty thousand the county
9 legislative authority may determine that no coroner shall be elected
10 and instead)). A noncharter county may have five county commissioners
11 as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055 through 36.32.0556.

12 (2) Each county legislative authority must appoint a coroner. If
13 a county has an elected coroner as of the effective date of this
14 section, the elected coroner may continue in office until the
15 coroner's term of office expires, at which time the county
16 legislative authority must appoint a coroner. In a county with a
17 population of ((two hundred fifty thousand)) \$250,000 or more, the
18 county legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a
19 medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified
20 in RCW 36.24.190. Any county may enter into an interlocal agreement
21 under chapter 39.34 RCW with an adjoining county for the provision of
22 coroner or medical examiner services. ((A noncharter county may have
23 five county commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055
24 through 36.32.0558.))

25 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.101.480 and 2021 c 127 s 3 are each amended to
26 read as follows:

27 (1)(a) All ((elected coroners, appointed)) coroners, persons
28 serving as coroners, medical examiners, and all other full-time
29 medicolegal investigative personnel employed by a county coroner's or
30 medical examiner's office must successfully complete medicolegal
31 forensic investigation training through the medicolegal training
32 academy program within 12 months of being ((elected,)) appointed((,))
33 or employed unless otherwise exempted by the commission. This section
34 does not apply to elected prosecutors who are coroners in their
35 counties.

36 (b) All part-time medicolegal investigative personnel employed by
37 a county coroner's or medical examiner's office must successfully
38 complete medicolegal forensic investigation training through the

1 medicolegal training academy program within 18 months of being
2 employed unless otherwise exempted by the commission.

3 (2) The commission, in conjunction with the Washington
4 association of coroners and medical examiners and a practicing
5 physician selected by the commission, shall develop the medicolegal
6 forensic investigation training curriculum and adopt the standards
7 for the medicolegal training academy and any exemption from the
8 requirement to complete the medicolegal forensic investigation
9 training. The commission shall exempt from this requirement any
10 coroner, medical examiner, or medicolegal investigative personnel who
11 has obtained training comparable to the medicolegal forensic
12 investigation training by virtue of educational or professional
13 training or experience.

14 (3) The commission must certify successful completion of the
15 medicolegal forensic investigation training or exemption from the
16 medicolegal training requirement within 60 days from the receipt of
17 proof of completion or request for exemption.

18 (4) The medicolegal forensic investigation training required
19 under this section must:

20 (a) Meet the recommendations of the national commission on
21 forensic science for certification and accreditation; and

22 (b) Satisfy the requirements for training on the subject of
23 sudden, unexplained child death including, but not limited to, sudden
24 infant death syndrome developed pursuant to RCW 43.103.100 and
25 missing persons protocols pursuant to RCW 43.103.110.

26 (5) Certification under this section is a condition of continued
27 employment in a coroner's or medical examiner's office.

28 (6) A county in which a coroner, person serving as coroner,
29 medical examiner, or other medicolegal investigative employee, who
30 has not otherwise been exempted by the commission, is not certified
31 within 12 months of being elected, appointed, or employed as required
32 by this section, may have its reimbursement from the death
33 investigations account reduced as provided under RCW 68.50.104 until
34 the office is in compliance with all requirements under this section.

35 **Sec. 4.** RCW 36.16.050 and 2010 1st sp.s. c 26 s 5 are each
36 amended to read as follows:

37 Every county official before he or she enters upon the duties of
38 his or her office shall furnish a bond conditioned that he or she
39 will faithfully perform the duties of his or her office and account

1 for and pay over all money which may come into his or her hands by
2 virtue of his or her office, and that he or she, or his or her
3 executors or administrators, will deliver to his or her successor
4 safe and undefaced all books, records, papers, seals, equipment, and
5 furniture belonging to his or her office. Bonds of elective county
6 officers shall be as follows:

7 (1) Assessor: Amount to be fixed and sureties to be approved by
8 proper county legislative authority;

9 (2) Auditor: Amount to be fixed at not less than (~~ten thousand~~
10 ~~dollars~~) \$10,000 and sureties to be approved by the proper county
11 legislative authority;

12 (3) Clerk: Amount to be fixed in a penal sum not less than double
13 the amount of money liable to come into his or her hands and sureties
14 to be approved by the judge or a majority of the judges presiding
15 over the court of which he or she is clerk: PROVIDED, That the
16 maximum bond fixed for the clerk shall not exceed in amount that
17 required for the treasurer in the same county;

18 (~~(4) (Coroner: Amount to be fixed at not less than five thousand~~
19 ~~dollars with sureties to be approved by the proper county legislative~~
20 ~~authority;~~

21 ~~(5))~~ Members of the proper county legislative authority:
22 Sureties to be approved by the county clerk and the amounts to be:

23 (a) In each county with a population of (~~one hundred twenty-five~~
24 ~~thousand~~) 125,000 or more, (~~twenty-five thousand dollars~~) \$25,000;

25 (b) In each county with a population of from (~~seventy thousand~~)
26 70,000 to less than (~~one hundred twenty-five thousand~~) 125,000,
27 (~~twenty-two thousand five hundred dollars~~) \$22,500;

28 (c) In each county with a population of from (~~forty thousand~~)
29 40,000 to less than (~~seventy thousand~~) 70,000, (~~twenty thousand~~
30 ~~dollars~~) \$20,000;

31 (d) In each county with a population of from (~~eighteen~~
32 ~~thousand~~) 18,000 to less than (~~forty thousand~~) 40,000, (~~fifteen~~
33 ~~thousand dollars~~) \$15,000;

34 (e) In each county with a population of from (~~twelve thousand~~)
35 12,000 to less than (~~eighteen thousand~~) 18,000, (~~ten thousand~~
36 ~~dollars~~) \$10,000;

37 (f) In each county with a population of from (~~eight thousand~~)
38 8,000 to less than (~~twelve thousand~~) 12,000, (~~seven thousand five~~
39 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$7,500;

40 (g) In all other counties, (~~five thousand dollars~~) \$5,000;

1 (~~(6)~~) (5) Prosecuting attorney: In the amount of (~~five~~
2 ~~thousand dollars~~) \$5,000 with sureties to be approved by the proper
3 county legislative authority;

4 (~~(7)~~) (6) Sheriff: Amount to be fixed and bond approved by the
5 proper county legislative authority at not less than (~~five~~
6 ~~thousand~~) \$5,000 nor more than (~~fifty thousand dollars~~) \$50,000;
7 surety to be a surety company authorized to do business in this
8 state;

9 (~~(8)~~) (7) Treasurer: Sureties to be approved by the proper
10 county legislative authority and the amounts to be fixed by the
11 proper county legislative authority at double the amount liable to
12 come into the treasurer's hands during his or her term, the maximum
13 amount of the bond, however, not to exceed:

14 (a) In each county with a population of (~~two hundred ten~~
15 ~~thousand~~) 210,000 or more, (~~two hundred fifty thousand dollars~~)
16 \$250,000;

17 (b) In each county with a population of from (~~one hundred~~
18 ~~twenty five thousand~~) 125,000 to less than (~~two hundred ten~~
19 ~~thousand~~) 210,000, (~~two hundred thousand dollars~~) \$200,000;

20 (c) In each county with a population of from (~~eighteen~~
21 ~~thousand~~) 18,000 to less than (~~one hundred twenty five thousand~~)
22 125,000, (~~one hundred fifty thousand dollars~~) \$150,000;

23 (d) In all other counties, (~~one hundred thousand dollars~~)
24 \$100,000.

25 The treasurer's bond shall be conditioned that all moneys
26 received by him or her for the use of the county shall be paid as the
27 proper county legislative authority shall from time to time direct,
28 except where special provision is made by law for the payment of such
29 moneys, by order of any court, or otherwise, and for the faithful
30 discharge of his or her duties.

31 Bonds for other than elective officials, if deemed necessary by
32 the proper county legislative authority, shall be in such amount and
33 form as such legislative authority shall determine.

34 In the approval of official bonds, the chair may act for the
35 county legislative authority if it is not in session.

36 **Sec. 5.** RCW 36.17.020 and 2021 c 127 s 6 are each amended to
37 read as follows:

38 The county legislative authority of each county or a county
39 commissioner or councilmember salary commission which conforms with

1 RCW 36.17.024 is authorized to establish the salaries of coroners and
2 of the elected officials of the county. The state and county shall
3 contribute to the costs of the salary of the elected prosecuting
4 attorney as set forth in subsection (11) of this section. The annual
5 salary of a county elected official shall not be less than the
6 following:

7 (1) In each county with a population of (~~one million~~) 1,000,000
8 or more: Auditor, clerk, treasurer, sheriff, members of the county
9 legislative authority, and coroner, (~~eighteen thousand dollars~~)
10 \$18,000; and assessor, (~~nineteen thousand dollars~~) \$19,000;

11 (2) In each county with a population of from (~~two hundred ten~~
12 ~~thousand~~) 210,000 to less than one million: Auditor, (~~seventeen~~
13 ~~thousand six hundred dollars~~) \$17,600; clerk, (~~seventeen thousand~~
14 ~~six hundred dollars~~) \$17,600; treasurer, (~~seventeen thousand six~~
15 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$17,600; sheriff, (~~nineteen thousand five hundred~~
16 ~~dollars~~) \$19,500; assessor, (~~seventeen thousand six hundred~~
17 ~~dollars~~) \$17,600; members of the county legislative authority,
18 (~~nineteen thousand five hundred dollars~~) \$19,500; and coroner,
19 (~~seventeen thousand six hundred dollars~~) \$17,600;

20 (3) In each county with a population of from (~~one hundred~~
21 ~~twenty five thousand~~) 125,000 to less than (~~two hundred ten~~
22 ~~thousand~~) 210,000: Auditor, (~~sixteen thousand dollars~~) \$16,000;
23 clerk, (~~sixteen thousand dollars~~) \$16,000; treasurer, (~~sixteen~~
24 ~~thousand dollars~~) \$16,000; sheriff, (~~seventeen thousand six hundred~~
25 ~~dollars~~) \$17,600; assessor, (~~sixteen thousand dollars~~) \$16,000;
26 members of the county legislative authority, (~~seventeen thousand six~~
27 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$17,600; and coroner, (~~sixteen thousand dollars~~)
28 \$16,000;

29 (4) In each county with a population of from (~~seventy thousand~~)
30 70,000 to less than (~~one hundred twenty five thousand~~) 125,000:
31 Auditor, (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars~~) \$14,900; clerk,
32 (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars~~) \$14,900; treasurer,
33 (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars~~) \$14,900; assessor,
34 (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars~~) \$14,900; sheriff,
35 (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars~~) \$14,900; members of the
36 county legislative authority, (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred~~
37 ~~dollars~~) \$14,900; and coroner, (~~fourteen thousand nine hundred~~
38 ~~dollars~~) \$14,900;

39 (5) In each county with a population of from (~~forty thousand~~)
40 40,000 to less than (~~seventy thousand~~) 70,000: Auditor, (~~thirteen~~

1 ~~thousand eight hundred dollars~~) \$13,800; clerk, (~~thirteen thousand~~
2 ~~eight hundred dollars~~) \$13,800; treasurer, (~~thirteen thousand eight~~
3 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$13,800; assessor, (~~thirteen thousand eight~~
4 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$13,800; sheriff, (~~thirteen thousand eight hundred~~
5 ~~dollars~~) \$13,800; members of the county legislative authority,
6 (~~thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars~~) \$13,800; and coroner,
7 (~~thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars~~) \$13,800;

8 (6) In each county with a population of from (~~eighteen~~
9 ~~thousand~~) 18,000 to less than (~~forty thousand~~) 40,000: Auditor,
10 (~~twelve thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$12,100; clerk, (~~twelve~~
11 ~~thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$12,100; treasurer, (~~twelve thousand~~
12 ~~one hundred dollars~~) \$12,100; sheriff, (~~twelve thousand one hundred~~
13 ~~dollars~~) \$12,100; assessor, (~~twelve thousand one hundred dollars~~)
14 \$12,100; members of the county legislative authority, (~~eleven~~
15 ~~thousand dollars~~) \$11,000; and coroner, \$11,000 or on a per case
16 basis as determined by the county legislative authority;

17 (7) In each county with a population of from (~~twelve thousand~~)
18 12,000 to less than (~~eighteen thousand~~) 18,000: Auditor, (~~ten~~
19 ~~thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$10,100; clerk, (~~ten thousand one~~
20 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$10,100; treasurer, (~~ten thousand one hundred~~
21 ~~dollars~~) \$10,100; assessor, (~~ten thousand one hundred dollars~~)
22 \$10,100; sheriff, (~~eleven thousand two hundred dollars~~) \$11,200;
23 members of the county legislative authority, (~~nine thousand four~~
24 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$9,400; and coroner, \$9,400 or on a per case basis
25 as determined by the county legislative authority;

26 (8) In each county with a population of from (~~eight thousand~~)
27 8,000 to less than (~~twelve thousand~~) 12,000: Auditor, (~~ten~~
28 ~~thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$10,100; clerk, (~~ten thousand one~~
29 ~~hundred dollars~~) \$10,100; treasurer, (~~ten thousand one hundred~~
30 ~~dollars~~) \$10,100; assessor, (~~ten thousand one hundred dollars~~)
31 \$10,100; sheriff, (~~eleven thousand two hundred dollars~~) \$11,200;
32 members of the county legislative authority, (~~seven thousand~~
33 ~~dollars~~) \$7,000; and coroner, \$7,000 or on a per case basis as
34 determined by the county legislative authority;

35 (9) In each county with a population of from (~~five thousand~~)
36 5,000 to less than (~~eight thousand~~) 8,000: Auditor, (~~nine thousand~~
37 ~~one hundred dollars~~) \$9,100; clerk, (~~nine thousand one hundred~~
38 ~~dollars~~) \$9,100; treasurer, (~~nine thousand one hundred dollars~~)
39 \$9,100; assessor, (~~nine thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$9,100;
40 sheriff, (~~ten thousand five hundred dollars~~) \$10,500; members of

1 the county legislative authority, (~~six thousand five hundred~~
2 ~~dollars~~) \$6,500; and coroner, \$6,500 or on a per case basis as
3 determined by the county legislative authority;

4 (10) In each other county: Auditor, (~~nine thousand one hundred~~
5 ~~dollars~~) \$9,100; clerk, (~~nine thousand one hundred dollars~~)
6 \$9,100; treasurer, (~~nine thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$9,100;
7 sheriff, (~~ten thousand five hundred dollars~~) \$10,500; assessor,
8 (~~nine thousand one hundred dollars~~) \$9,100; members of the county
9 legislative authority, (~~six thousand five hundred dollars~~) \$6,500;
10 and coroner, \$6,500 or on a per case basis as determined by the
11 county legislative authority;

12 (11) The state of Washington shall contribute an amount equal to
13 one-half the salary of a superior court judge towards the salary of
14 the elected prosecuting attorney. Upon receipt of the state
15 contribution, a county shall continue to contribute towards the
16 salary of the elected prosecuting attorney in an amount that equals
17 or exceeds that contributed by the county in 2008.

18 **Sec. 6.** RCW 36.24.205 and 2021 c 127 s 1 are each amended to
19 read as follows:

20 Within 12 months of being (~~elected or~~) appointed to the office,
21 a coroner or medical examiner must have a certificate of completion
22 of medicolegal forensic investigation training that complies with the
23 standards adopted for the medicolegal training academy adopted by the
24 criminal justice training commission in conjunction with the
25 Washington association of coroners and medical examiners and a
26 practicing physician selected by the commission pursuant to RCW
27 43.101.480. This requirement does not apply to an elected prosecutor
28 acting as the ex officio coroner in a county. All medicolegal
29 investigative personnel employed by any coroner's or medical
30 examiner's office must complete medicolegal forensic investigation
31 training as required under RCW 43.101.480. A county in which the
32 coroner or county medical examiner has not obtained such
33 certification within 12 months of assuming office may have its
34 reimbursement from the death investigations account reduced as
35 provided under RCW 68.50.104.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** This act is necessary for the immediate
37 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of

1 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
2 effect immediately.

--- **END** ---