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**HOUSE BILL 2432**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Klippert and Goodman

AN ACT Relating to coroners; amending RCW 36.16.030 and 68.50.104; adding new sections to chapter 36.24 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.101 RCW; and providing an effective date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 36.24 RCW to read as follows:

Within twelve months of assuming office, a person who files a declaration of candidacy for the office of coroner or county medical examiner must have a certificate of completion of medicolegal forensic investigation training that complies with the standards adopted for the medicolegal training academy adopted by the criminal justice training commission in conjunction with the Washington association of coroners and medical examiners pursuant to section 3 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 36.24 RCW to read as follows:

Except those run by a county prosecutor, all county coroner's offices and medical examiner's offices must be accredited by either the international association of coroners and medical examiners or the national association of medical examiners no later than July 1, 2024, and maintain continued accreditation thereafter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.101 RCW to read as follows:

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

(2) The commission, in conjunction with the Washington association of coroners and medical examiners, shall develop the medicolegal forensic investigation training curriculum and adopt the standards for the medicolegal training academy and any exemption from the requirement to complete the medicolegal training academy.

(3) The commission must certify successful completion of the medicolegal training academy or exemption from the medicolegal training academy within sixty days from the receipt of proof of completion or request for exemption.

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

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

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

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

**Sec.**  RCW 36.16.030 and 2015 c 53 s 61 are each amended to read as follows:

Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, a county coroner, three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney, a county sheriff, and a county treasurer((~~, except that in each county with a population of less than forty thousand no coroner shall be elected and the prosecuting attorney shall be ex officio coroner. Whenever the population of a county increases to forty thousand or more, the prosecuting attorney shall continue as ex officio coroner until a coroner is elected, at the next general election at which the office of prosecuting attorney normally would be elected, and assumes office as provided in RCW 29A.60.280. In any county where the population has once attained forty thousand people and a current coroner is in office and a subsequent census indicates less than forty thousand people, the county legislative authority may maintain the office of coroner by resolution or ordinance. If the county legislative authority has not passed a resolution or enacted an ordinance to maintain the office of coroner, the elected coroner shall remain in office for the remainder of the term for which he or she was elected, but no coroner shall be elected at the next election at which that office would otherwise be filled and the prosecuting attorney shall be the ex officio coroner~~)). In a county with a population of two hundred fifty thousand or more, the county legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified in RCW 36.24.190. A noncharter county may have five county commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055 through 36.32.0558.

**Sec.**  RCW 68.50.104 and 2019 c 317 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The cost of autopsy shall be borne by the county in which the autopsy is performed, except when requested by the department of labor and industries, in which case, the department shall bear the cost of such autopsy.

(2)(a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, when the county bears the cost of an autopsy, it shall be reimbursed from the death investigations account, established by RCW 43.79.445, as follows:

(i) Up to forty percent of the cost of contracting for the services of a pathologist to perform an autopsy;

(ii) Up to ((~~twenty-five~~)) thirty percent of the salary of pathologists who are primarily engaged in performing autopsies and are (A) county coroners or county medical examiners, or (B) employees of a county coroner or county medical examiner; and

(iii) One hundred percent of the cost of autopsies conducted under RCW 70.54.450.

(b) When the county bears the cost of an autopsy of a child under the age of three whose death was sudden and unexplained, the county shall be reimbursed for the expenses of the autopsy when the death scene investigation and the autopsy have been conducted under RCW 43.103.100 (4) and (5), and the autopsy has been done at a facility designed for the performance of autopsies.

(3) Payments from the account shall be made pursuant to biennial appropriation: PROVIDED, That no county may reduce funds appropriated for this purpose below 1983 budgeted levels. Where the county coroner's office or county medical examiner's office is not certified pursuant to section 3 of this act, the treasurer's office shall withhold autopsy reimbursement funds until certification is achieved.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Section 4 of this act takes effect January 1, 2027.

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