
HOUSE BILL 2432

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Representatives Klippert and Goodman

Read first time 01/14/20. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to coroners; amending RCW 36.16.030 and
2 68.50.104; adding new sections to chapter 36.24 RCW; adding a new
3 section to chapter 43.101 RCW; and providing an effective date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 36.24
6 RCW to read as follows:

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

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 36.24
16 RCW to read as follows:

17 Except those run by a county prosecutor, all county coroner's
18 offices and medical examiner's offices must be accredited by either
19 the international association of coroners and medical examiners or

1 the national association of medical examiners no later than July 1,
2 2024, and maintain continued accreditation thereafter.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.101
4 RCW to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

32 **Sec. 4.** RCW 36.16.030 and 2015 c 53 s 61 are each amended to
33 read as follows:

34 Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county
35 there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county
36 a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, a county
37 coroner, three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney, a
38 county sheriff, and a county treasurer (~~(, except that in each county~~

1 with a population of less than forty thousand no coroner shall be
2 elected and the prosecuting attorney shall be ex officio coroner.
3 Whenever the population of a county increases to forty thousand or
4 more, the prosecuting attorney shall continue as ex officio coroner
5 until a coroner is elected, at the next general election at which the
6 office of prosecuting attorney normally would be elected, and assumes
7 office as provided in RCW 29A.60.280. In any county where the
8 population has once attained forty thousand people and a current
9 coroner is in office and a subsequent census indicates less than
10 forty thousand people, the county legislative authority may maintain
11 the office of coroner by resolution or ordinance. If the county
12 legislative authority has not passed a resolution or enacted an
13 ordinance to maintain the office of coroner, the elected coroner
14 shall remain in office for the remainder of the term for which he or
15 she was elected, but no coroner shall be elected at the next election
16 at which that office would otherwise be filled and the prosecuting
17 attorney shall be the ex officio coroner)). In a county with a
18 population of two hundred fifty thousand or more, the county
19 legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a
20 medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified
21 in RCW 36.24.190. A noncharter county may have five county
22 commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055 through
23 36.32.0558.

24 **Sec. 5.** RCW 68.50.104 and 2019 c 317 s 4 are each amended to
25 read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

3 (b) When the county bears the cost of an autopsy of a child under
4 the age of three whose death was sudden and unexplained, the county
5 shall be reimbursed for the expenses of the autopsy when the death
6 scene investigation and the autopsy have been conducted under RCW
7 43.103.100 (4) and (5), and the autopsy has been done at a facility
8 designed for the performance of autopsies.

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

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Section 4 of this act takes effect January
16 1, 2027.

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