

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1326**

Chapter 127, Laws of 2021

67th Legislature  
2021 Regular Session

CORONERS AND MEDICAL EXAMINERS—VARIOUS PROVISIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 25, 2021—Except for sections 4 and 6, which become effective January 1, 2025.

Passed by the House April 13, 2021  
Yeas 88 Nays 10

LAURIE JINKINS

**Speaker of the House of  
Representatives**

Passed by the Senate April 3, 2021  
Yeas 46 Nays 0

DENNY HECK

**President of the Senate**

Approved April 26, 2021 2:14 PM

JAY INSLEE

**Governor of the State of Washington**

CERTIFICATE

I, Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1326** as passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BERNARD DEAN

**Chief Clerk**

FILED

April 26, 2021

**Secretary of State  
State of Washington**

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**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1326**

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AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

Passed Legislature - 2021 Regular Session

**State of Washington**                      **67th Legislature**                      **2021 Regular Session**

**By** House Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Lekanoff, Goodman, Ramel, Orwall, Klippert, Bateman, Lovick, and Pollet)

READ FIRST TIME 02/09/21.

1            AN ACT Relating to coroners and medical examiners; amending RCW  
2 36.16.030, 36.16.030, 36.17.020, 68.50.010, and 68.50.104; adding new  
3 sections to chapter 36.24 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.101  
4 RCW; providing an effective date; and providing an expiration date.

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

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

8            Within 12 months of being elected or appointed to the office, a  
9 coroner or medical examiner must have a certificate of completion of  
10 medicolegal forensic investigation training that complies with the  
11 standards adopted for the medicolegal training academy adopted by the  
12 criminal justice training commission in conjunction with the  
13 Washington association of coroners and medical examiners and a  
14 practicing physician selected by the commission pursuant to section 3  
15 of this act. This requirement does not apply to an elected prosecutor  
16 acting as the ex officio coroner in a county. All medicolegal  
17 investigative personnel employed by any coroner's or medical  
18 examiner's office must complete medicolegal forensic investigation  
19 training as required under section 3 of this act. A county in which  
20 the coroner or county medical examiner has not obtained such  
21 certification within 12 months of assuming office may have its

1 reimbursement from the death investigations account reduced as  
2 provided under RCW 68.50.104.

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

5 Except those run by a county prosecutor, all county coroner's  
6 offices and medical examiner's offices must be accredited by either  
7 the international association of coroners and medical examiners or  
8 the national association of medical examiners no later than July 1,  
9 2025, and maintain continued accreditation thereafter. A county that  
10 contracts for its coroner or medical examiner services with an  
11 accredited coroner or medical examiner's office in another county  
12 does not need to maintain accreditation.

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

15 (1) (a) All elected coroners, appointed coroners, persons serving  
16 as coroners, medical examiners, and all other full-time medicolegal  
17 investigative personnel employed by a county coroner's or medical  
18 examiner's office must successfully complete medicolegal forensic  
19 investigation training through the medicolegal training academy  
20 program within 12 months of being elected, appointed, or employed  
21 unless otherwise exempted by the commission. This section does not  
22 apply to elected prosecutors who are coroners in their counties.

23 (b) All part-time medicolegal investigative personnel employed by  
24 a county coroner's or medical examiner's office must successfully  
25 complete medicolegal forensic investigation training through the  
26 medicolegal training academy program within 18 months of being  
27 employed unless otherwise exempted by the commission.

28 (2) The commission, in conjunction with the Washington  
29 association of coroners and medical examiners and a practicing  
30 physician selected by the commission, shall develop the medicolegal  
31 forensic investigation training curriculum and adopt the standards  
32 for the medicolegal training academy and any exemption from the  
33 requirement to complete the medicolegal forensic investigation  
34 training. The commission shall exempt from this requirement any  
35 coroner, medical examiner, or medicolegal investigative personnel who  
36 has obtained training comparable to the medicolegal forensic  
37 investigation training by virtue of educational or professional  
38 training or experience.

1 (3) The commission must certify successful completion of the  
2 medicolegal forensic investigation training or exemption from the  
3 medicolegal training requirement within 60 days from the receipt of  
4 proof of completion or request for exemption.

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county  
25 there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county  
26 a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, a county  
27 coroner, three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney, a  
28 county sheriff, and a county treasurer, except that in each county  
29 with a population of less than forty thousand the county legislative  
30 authority may determine that no coroner shall be elected and (~~the~~  
31 ~~prosecuting attorney shall be ex officio coroner. Whenever the~~  
32 ~~population of a county increases to forty thousand or more, the~~  
33 ~~prosecuting attorney shall continue as ex officio coroner until a~~  
34 ~~coroner is elected, at the next general election at which the office~~  
35 ~~of prosecuting attorney normally would be elected, and assumes office~~  
36 ~~as provided in RCW 29A.60.280. In any county where the population has~~  
37 ~~once attained forty thousand people and a current coroner is in~~  
38 ~~office and a subsequent census indicates less than forty thousand~~  
39 ~~people, the county legislative authority may maintain the office of~~

1 ~~coroner by resolution or ordinance. If the county legislative~~  
2 ~~authority has not passed a resolution or enacted an ordinance to~~  
3 ~~maintain the office of coroner, the elected coroner shall remain in~~  
4 ~~office for the remainder of the term for which he or she was elected,~~  
5 ~~but no coroner shall be elected at the next election at which that~~  
6 ~~office would otherwise be filled and the prosecuting attorney shall~~  
7 ~~be the ex officio coroner)) instead appoint a coroner. In a county~~  
8 with a population of two hundred fifty thousand or more, the county  
9 legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a  
10 medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified  
11 in RCW 36.24.190. Any county may enter into an interlocal agreement  
12 under chapter 39.34 RCW with an adjoining county for the provision of  
13 coroner or medical examiner services. A noncharter county may have  
14 five county commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055  
15 through 36.32.0558.

16 **Sec. 5.** RCW 36.16.030 and 2015 c 53 s 61 are each amended to  
17 read as follows:

18 Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county  
19 there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county  
20 a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, a county  
21 coroner, three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney, a  
22 county sheriff, and a county treasurer, except that in each county  
23 with a population of less than forty thousand no coroner shall be  
24 elected and the prosecuting attorney shall be ex officio coroner.  
25 Whenever the population of a county increases to forty thousand or  
26 more, the prosecuting attorney shall continue as ex officio coroner  
27 until a coroner is elected, at the next general election at which the  
28 office of prosecuting attorney normally would be elected, and assumes  
29 office as provided in RCW 29A.60.280. In any county where the  
30 population has once attained forty thousand people and a current  
31 coroner is in office and a subsequent census indicates less than  
32 forty thousand people, the county legislative authority may maintain  
33 the office of coroner by resolution or ordinance. If the county  
34 legislative authority has not passed a resolution or enacted an  
35 ordinance to maintain the office of coroner, the elected coroner  
36 shall remain in office for the remainder of the term for which he or  
37 she was elected, but no coroner shall be elected at the next election  
38 at which that office would otherwise be filled and the prosecuting  
39 attorney shall be the ex officio coroner. In a county with a

1 population of two hundred fifty thousand or more, the county  
2 legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a  
3 medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified  
4 in RCW 36.24.190. Any county may enter into an interlocal agreement  
5 under chapter 39.34 RCW with an adjoining county for the provision of  
6 coroner or medical examiner services. A noncharter county may have  
7 five county commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055  
8 through 36.32.0558.

9       **Sec. 6.** RCW 36.17.020 and 2008 c 309 s 2 are each amended to  
10 read as follows:

11       The county legislative authority of each county or a county  
12 commissioner or councilmember salary commission which conforms with  
13 RCW 36.17.024 is authorized to establish the salaries of the elected  
14 officials of the county. The state and county shall contribute to the  
15 costs of the salary of the elected prosecuting attorney as set forth  
16 in subsection (11) of this section. The annual salary of a county  
17 elected official shall not be less than the following:

18       (1) In each county with a population of one million or more:  
19 Auditor, clerk, treasurer, sheriff, members of the county legislative  
20 authority, and coroner, eighteen thousand dollars; and assessor,  
21 nineteen thousand dollars;

22       (2) In each county with a population of from two hundred ten  
23 thousand to less than one million: Auditor, seventeen thousand six  
24 hundred dollars; clerk, seventeen thousand six hundred dollars;  
25 treasurer, seventeen thousand six hundred dollars; sheriff, nineteen  
26 thousand five hundred dollars; assessor, seventeen thousand six  
27 hundred dollars; members of the county legislative authority,  
28 nineteen thousand five hundred dollars; and coroner, seventeen  
29 thousand six hundred dollars;

30       (3) In each county with a population of from one hundred twenty-  
31 five thousand to less than two hundred ten thousand: Auditor, sixteen  
32 thousand dollars; clerk, sixteen thousand dollars; treasurer, sixteen  
33 thousand dollars; sheriff, seventeen thousand six hundred dollars;  
34 assessor, sixteen thousand dollars; members of the county legislative  
35 authority, seventeen thousand six hundred dollars; and coroner,  
36 sixteen thousand dollars;

37       (4) In each county with a population of from seventy thousand to  
38 less than one hundred twenty-five thousand: Auditor, fourteen  
39 thousand nine hundred dollars; clerk, fourteen thousand nine hundred

1 dollars; treasurer, fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars; assessor,  
2 fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars; sheriff, fourteen thousand  
3 nine hundred dollars; members of the county legislative authority,  
4 fourteen thousand nine hundred dollars; and coroner, fourteen  
5 thousand nine hundred dollars;

6 (5) In each county with a population of from forty thousand to  
7 less than seventy thousand: Auditor, thirteen thousand eight hundred  
8 dollars; clerk, thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars; treasurer,  
9 thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars; assessor, thirteen thousand  
10 eight hundred dollars; sheriff, thirteen thousand eight hundred  
11 dollars; members of the county legislative authority, thirteen  
12 thousand eight hundred dollars; and coroner, thirteen thousand eight  
13 hundred dollars;

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

22 (7) In each county with a population of from twelve thousand to  
23 less than eighteen thousand: Auditor, ten thousand one hundred  
24 dollars; clerk, ten thousand one hundred dollars; treasurer, ten  
25 thousand one hundred dollars; assessor, ten thousand one hundred  
26 dollars; sheriff, eleven thousand two hundred dollars; (~~and~~)  
27 members of the county legislative authority, nine thousand four  
28 hundred dollars; and coroner, \$9,400 or on a per case basis as  
29 determined by the county legislative authority;

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

38 (9) In each county with a population of from five thousand to  
39 less than eight thousand: Auditor, nine thousand one hundred dollars;  
40 clerk, nine thousand one hundred dollars; treasurer, nine thousand

1 one hundred dollars; assessor, nine thousand one hundred dollars;  
2 sheriff, ten thousand five hundred dollars; (~~and~~) members of the  
3 county legislative authority, six thousand five hundred dollars; and  
4 coroner, \$6,500 or on a per case basis as determined by the county  
5 legislative authority;

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

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

19 **Sec. 7.** RCW 68.50.010 and 1963 c 178 s 1 are each amended to  
20 read as follows:

21 The jurisdiction of bodies of all deceased persons who come to  
22 their death suddenly when in apparent good health without medical  
23 attendance within the thirty-six hours preceding death; or where the  
24 circumstances of death indicate death was caused by unnatural or  
25 unlawful means; or where death occurs under suspicious circumstances;  
26 or where a coroner's autopsy or postmortem or coroner's inquest is to  
27 be held; or where death results from unknown or obscure causes, or  
28 where death occurs within one year following an accident; or where  
29 the death is caused by any violence whatsoever, or where death  
30 results from a known or suspected abortion; whether self-induced or  
31 otherwise; where death apparently results from drowning, hanging,  
32 burns, electrocution, gunshot wounds, stabs or cuts, lightning,  
33 starvation, radiation, exposure, alcoholism, narcotics or other  
34 addictions, tetanus, strangulations, suffocation or smothering; or  
35 where death is due to premature birth or still birth; or where death  
36 is due to a violent contagious disease or suspected contagious  
37 disease which may be a public health hazard; or where death results  
38 from alleged rape, carnal knowledge or sodomy, where death occurs in  
39 a jail or prison; where a body is found dead or is not claimed by



1 relatives or friends, is hereby vested in the county coroner or  
2 medical examiner, which bodies may be removed and placed in the  
3 morgue under such rules as are adopted by the coroner or medical  
4 examiner with the approval of the county commissioners, having  
5 jurisdiction, providing therein how the bodies shall be brought to  
6 and cared for at the morgue and held for the proper identification  
7 where necessary.

8 **Sec. 8.** RCW 68.50.104 and 2019 c 317 s 4 are each amended to  
9 read as follows:

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

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

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

20 (ii) Up to (~~twenty-five~~) 30 percent of the salary of  
21 pathologists who are primarily engaged in performing autopsies and  
22 are (A) county coroners or county medical examiners, or (B) employees  
23 of a county coroner or county medical examiner; and

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

26 (b) When the county bears the cost of an autopsy of a child under  
27 the age of three whose death was sudden and unexplained, the county  
28 shall be reimbursed for the expenses of the autopsy when the death  
29 scene investigation and the autopsy have been conducted under RCW  
30 43.103.100 (4) and (5), and the autopsy has been done at a facility  
31 designed for the performance of autopsies.

32 (3) Payments from the account shall be made pursuant to biennial  
33 appropriation: PROVIDED, That no county may reduce funds appropriated  
34 for this purpose below 1983 budgeted levels.

35 (4) Where the county coroner's office or county medical  
36 examiner's office is not accredited pursuant to section 2 of this  
37 act, or a coroner, medical examiner, or other medicolegal  
38 investigative employee is not certified as required by sections 1 and  
39 3 of this act, the state treasurer's office shall withhold 25 percent

1 of autopsy reimbursement funds until accreditation under section 2 of  
2 this act or compliance with sections 1 and 3 of this act is achieved.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** Sections 4 and 6 of this act take effect  
4 January 1, 2025.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** Section 5 of this act expires January 1,  
6 2025.

Passed by the House April 13, 2021.

Passed by the Senate April 3, 2021.

Approved by the Governor April 26, 2021.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State April 26, 2021.

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