

HB 1122 -- CORONERS

SPONSOR: Voss

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Local Government by a vote of 12 to 0 with 1 voting present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill requires a candidate for the office of coroner to provide evidence of completion of a certification to do death investigations when filing a declaration of candidacy.

The bill increases the statutory salary schedule for coroners based on the assessed valuation of the county in which they serve.

Currently, \$1,000 of a coroner's salary is payable only upon completion of 20 hours of classroom instruction per calendar year. This bill increases this salary authorization to \$2,000, and applies it not only to coroners but also to deputy coroners and assistants.

This bill repeals a provision of law allowing the coroner in any county not having a charter form of government to, upon approval of the county commission, receive additional compensation in any month during which more than three investigations are performed.

Criteria for the required 20 hours of classroom instruction are provided in the bill.

The bill provides that, when the office of sheriff is vacant and the coroner becomes the acting sheriff, if the previous sheriff is no longer receiving a salary, the coroner may be paid, in addition to the coroner's salary, the difference between the salaries of the sheriff and coroner.

Currently, a \$1 fee is collected for every death certificate issued in the state and credited to a fund to be used by the Missouri Coroners' and Medical Examiners' Association for trainings, equipment, and supplies. Any amount remaining in the fund over \$500,000 reverts to the credit of general revenue. This bill allows these funds to be used to reimburse coroners' offices for expenses incurred for training attendance. At least \$150,000 shall be designated annually for the above-stated purposes. A professional association of the county coroners of Missouri may establish a grant program with money remaining in the fund that may be used to assist coroners' offices, in an amount up to \$5,000 annually per office, with costs associated with investigative tools and equipment; construction, maintenance, or repair of office or

forensic laboratory space; and the discharge of death investigation responsibilities. No money remaining in this fund will revert to the credit of general revenue.

This bill repeals provisions related to the Coroner Standards and Training Commission, as provided in the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that coroners serve a vital function in society but often lack professional requirements and resources. This bill is an attempt to modernize the office of coroner. It will professionalize the office by codifying training requirements while increasing compensation for coroners and making more resources available to help them perform their duties.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Voss; Benjamin Pursifull, Missouri Coroners and Medical Examiners Association; Jessie Griffin; and Arnie C. Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say this bill wasn't on the radar for members of their organization. No resistance to increased standards and training is expected, though increases to the statutory salary schedule for coroners might be an issue.

Testifying in person on the bill was Missouri Association of Counties.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.