

House Bill 625

By: Representatives Mathis of the 149th, Wade of the 9th, Gullett of the 19th, Bentley of the 150th, Taylor of the 173rd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 16 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 coroners, so as to provide that coroners are full-time county employees; to set salaries of
3 deputy coroners; to provide minimum salaries of coroners; to remove certain death
4 investigation fees; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
5 purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 16 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to coroners, is
9 amended by revising Code Section 45-16-7, relating to appointment of deputy coroners, oath,
10 bond, fees, powers, and qualifications, as follows:

11 "45-16-7.

12 (a) As soon as practicable after July 1, 1980, and at the beginning of each term of the
13 coroner thereafter, the coroner of each county shall appoint a deputy coroner or coroners
14 as provided in this Code section. A deputy coroner shall be appointed for each county, and
15 one or more additional deputy coroners may be appointed for any county, in the discretion
16 of the coroner. Each deputy coroner shall serve at the pleasure of the coroner and may be

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17 replaced by the coroner at any time. Each deputy coroner shall take the same oath, give
 18 the same bond, ~~be entitled to the same fees,~~ and have the same powers as the coroner; but
 19 a deputy coroner shall act as coroner only when the coroner is himself or herself unable to
 20 act.

21 (b) No person shall be eligible to hold the office of deputy coroner unless he or she holds
 22 a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Any deputy coroner who is in office
 23 on July 1, 1980, however, shall without limitation be eligible to serve as deputy coroner at
 24 any time after said date without regard to whether he or she meets the requirements of this
 25 subsection.

26 ~~(c) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, there shall be appointed only one deputy~~
 27 ~~coroner, and, on and after July 1, 1999, there shall only be one deputy coroner in each such~~
 28 ~~county unless otherwise approved by the local governing authority of the county. At the~~
 29 ~~beginning of each term of the coroner, the coroner shall select the compensation formula~~
 30 ~~provided in either paragraph (1) or (2) of this subsection as the compensation formula for~~
 31 ~~deputy coroners employed by the coroner:~~

32 (1) A salary equal to one-half of the coroner's salary as provided in Code
 33 Section 45-16-11; or

34 (2) A salary equal to one-quarter of the coroner's salary as provided in Code
 35 Section 45-16-11, plus a fee of \$250.00 for each case worked by the deputy coroner.

36 (d) As of July 1, 2023, any deputy coroner being compensated by a county in an amount
 37 greater than the compensation formulas provided in subsection (c) of this Code section
 38 shall not have their compensation reduced for the remainder of the term of the coroner."

39 SECTION 2.

40 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 45-16-11, relating to compensation
 41 of county coroners, increases, calculation, supplements, and expenses, as follows:

42 "45-16-11.

43 (a)(1) Any other law to the contrary notwithstanding, the minimum annual salary of each
 44 coroner in any of the counties in this state in the following population brackets shall be
 45 fixed according to the population of the county in which he or she serves, as determined
 46 by the United States decennial census of ~~1990~~ 2020 or any future such census. Except
 47 as otherwise provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, each such coroner shall receive
 48 an annual salary, payable in equal monthly installments from the funds of the coroner's
 49 county, of not less than the amount fixed in the following schedule:

<u>Population</u>	<u>Minimum Salary</u>
51 0 — 11,889	\$ 1,200.00
52 11,890 — 19,999	2,400.00
53 20,000 — 34,999	3,600.00
54 <u>0 — 2,999</u>	<u>\$8,000.00</u>
55 <u>3,000 — 5,999</u>	<u>\$10,000.00</u>
56 <u>6,000 — 11,889</u>	<u>\$15,000.00</u>
57 <u>11,890 — 19,999</u>	<u>\$25,000.00</u>
58 <u>20,000 — 28,999</u>	<u>\$30,000.00</u>
59 <u>29,000 — 38,999</u>	<u>\$35,000.00</u>
60 <u>39,000 — 49,999</u>	<u>\$40,000.00</u>
61 <u>50,000 — 74,999</u>	<u>\$45,000.00</u>
62 <u>75,000 — 99,999</u>	<u>\$50,000.00</u>
63 <u>100,000 — 149,999</u>	<u>\$55,000.00</u>
64 <u>150,000 — 199,999</u>	<u>\$70,000.00</u>
65 <u>200,000 — 249,000</u>	<u>\$80,000.00</u>
66 <u>250,000 — 299,999</u>	<u>\$90,000.00</u>
67 <u>300,000 — 399,999</u>	<u>\$95,000.00</u>

68	400,000 — 499,999	\$100,000.00
69	500,000 or more	\$105,000.00

70 (2) Whenever the state employees subject to compensation plans authorized and
71 approved in accordance with Code Section 45-20-4 receive a cost-of-living increase or
72 general performance based increase of a certain percentage or a certain amount, the
73 amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and
74 in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived by increasing each of said amounts
75 through the application of longevity increases pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code
76 section, where applicable, shall be increased by the same percentage or same amount
77 applicable to such state employees. If the cost-of-living increase or general performance
78 based increase received by state employees is in different percentages or different
79 amounts as to certain categories of employees, the amounts fixed in the minimum salary
80 schedule in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the
81 amounts derived through the application of longevity increases, shall be increased by a
82 percentage or an amount not to exceed the average percentage or average amount of the
83 general increase in salary granted to the state employees. The Office of Planning and
84 Budget shall calculate the average percentage increase or average amount increase when
85 necessary. The periodic changes in the amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule
86 in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts
87 derived through the application of longevity increases, as authorized by this paragraph
88 shall become effective on the first day of January following the date that the
89 cost-of-living increases received by state employees become effective; provided,
90 however, that if the cost-of-living increases or general performance based increases
91 received by state employees become effective on January 1, such periodic changes in the
92 amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and
93 in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived through the application of longevity
94 increases, as authorized by this paragraph shall become effective on the same date that

95 the cost-of-living increases or general performance based increases received by state
96 employees become effective.

97 (3) The county governing authority may supplement the minimum annual salary of the
98 coroner in such amount as it may fix from time to time; but no coroner's compensation
99 supplement shall be decreased during any term of office. Any prior expenditure of
100 county funds to supplement the coroner's salary in the manner authorized by this
101 paragraph is ratified and confirmed. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall prohibit
102 the General Assembly by local law from supplementing the annual salary of the coroner.

103 (a.1) The office of coroner shall be a full-time position, and the county governing authority
104 shall provide the coroner the same employment benefits it provides the clerk of the superior
105 court, judge of the probate court, sheriff, and tax commissioner.

106 (b) The amounts provided in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this Code section and Code
107 Section 45-16-11.1, as increased by paragraph (2) of subsection (a) of this Code section,
108 shall be increased by multiplying said amounts by the percentage which equals 5 percent
109 times the number of completed four-year terms of office served by any coroner after
110 December 31, 2000, effective the first day of January following the completion of each
111 such period of service.

112 ~~(c) The minimum salaries provided for under this Code section shall be in addition to any~~
113 ~~fees, including the death investigation fee provided for under subsection (b) of Code~~
114 ~~Section 45-16-27, paid by the county governing authority to the coroner on a per-call basis~~
115 ~~and in addition to any expenses~~ Reserved.

116 (d) The minimum salaries provided for in this Code section shall be considered as salary
117 only. Expenses for deputies, equipment, supplies, copying equipment, and other necessary
118 and reasonable expenses for the operation of a coroner's office shall come from funds other
119 than the funds specified as salary in this Code section.

120 (e) This Code section shall not be construed to reduce the salary of any coroner in office
121 on July 1, 2001 2023; provided, however, that successors to such coroners in office on

122 July 1, ~~2001~~ 2023, shall be governed by the provisions of this Code section. All local
123 legislation in effect on July 1, ~~2001~~ 2023, or enacted thereafter affecting compensation for
124 coroners of the various counties shall be of full force and effect except where the same
125 provides for a salary lower than provided in this Code section, in which event this Code
126 section shall prevail."

127 **SECTION 3.**

128 Said chapter is further amended by repealing subsection (b) of Code Section 45-16-27,
129 relating to when inquest to be held, special situations, coroner's fee, issuance of subpoenas,
130 cost of copying, and limited disclosure of photographs, and designating said subsection as
131 reserved.

132 **SECTION 4.**

133 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.