

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6101

As of January 16, 2026

Title: An act relating to saving taxpayer money by requiring coroners to be appointed rather than elected.

Brief Description: Requiring coroners to be appointed rather than elected.

Sponsors: Senators King, Saldaña and Valdez.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/19/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that each county legislative authority appoint a coroner.
- Maintains existing provisions allowing some counties to appoint a medical examiner.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Every county in Washington has a coroner or medical examiner to investigate deaths, conduct inquests, order autopsies, and to determine cause of death in certain cases. Some counties elect its coroner, while others appoint a coroner or medical examiner. A county may enter into an interlocal agreement with an adjoining county for the provision of coroner or medical examiner services.

Whether a county has a coroner or medical examiner, and how that person is chosen, is dependent on the size of the county and on whether the county is a charter county or a non-charter county. In the seven charter counties, all seven have appointed a coroner or medical examiner. In a non-charter county with a population of less than 40,000, the county

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

legislative authority may appoint a coroner. In a non-charter county above 40,000, but under 250,000, the coroner is elected.

In a non-charter county with a population of 250,000 or more, the county legislative authority, with voter approval, may replace the coroner with a medical examiner. Medical examiners are appointed rather than elected. Two counties have established an appointed medical examiner position.

Coroners, medical examiners, and all other full-time medicolegal investigative personnel in a coroner or medical examiner's office must, within 12 months of being elected, appointed, or employed, complete medicolegal forensic investigation training developed by the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) in conjunction with the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, and a practicing physician selected by the CJTC.

Summary of Bill: Each county legislative authority must appoint a coroner. If a county has an elected coroner as of the effective date of the bill, the elected coroner may continue in office until the coroner's term of office expires, at which time the county legislative authority must appoint a coroner. The requirement that an elected county coroner submit a bond before they take on the duties of their office is removed. Provisions allowing a non-charter county with a population of 250,000 or more to replace the coroner position with a medical examiner are not changed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2026.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.