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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 6349

BILL NUMBER: SB 149

NOTE PREPARED: Jan 29, 2008

BILL AMENDED:

SUBJECT: Coroner and Deputy Coroner Training.

FIRST AUTHOR: Sen. Miller

FIRST SPONSOR: Rep. C. Brown

BILL STATUS: As Passed Senate

FUNDS AFFECTED: GENERAL
 DEDICATED
 FEDERAL

IMPACT: State & Local

Summary of Legislation: This bill requires a coroner in office on July 1, 2008, to complete a required training course before January 1, 2009. The bill also requires a deputy coroner in office on July 1, 2008, to complete a required training course before July 1, 2009.

Effective Date: July 1, 2008.

Explanation of State Expenditures: The bill would specify that training requirements enacted in SEA 191-2007 apply to all coroners in office, and deputy coroners employed, as of July 1, 2008. The bill would require all elected coroners to complete the initial Medicolegal Death Investigator Certification Program training before January 1, 2009. Failure to complete the certification would require the county to withhold the paycheck of a noncompliant coroner or deputy coroner until the training requirements are met unless certain unusual circumstances would make the withholding of the paycheck unjust. (Deputy coroners are required by rule to complete the initial certification requirement, subject to dismissal for noncompliance.)

The fiscal impact of this bill is expected to be minimal. The Coroner's Training Board (CTB) reported that as of November 14, 2007, 64 coroners had completed the initial certification, and another 26 have completed the 40-hour training course and need to either pass the examination or complete the externship requirement. Of the 92 county coroners, 2 remain noncompliant; they have not completed any of the requirements to fulfill the certification requirement. The CTB routinely provides the initial training and continuing education, and pays for the associated travel expense that is funded by the Coroner's Continuing Education Fee. [See *Explanation of Revenue* below.] The initial certification course is offered annually for new coroners and deputy coroners, as is the continuing education that is required for all certified coroners and deputy coroners.

Background Information- The Coroner's Training Board has developed a Medicolegal Death Investigator Certification program for Indiana that requires 40 classroom hours, completion of an externship, and a passing grade on a 200-question written exam. The certification course is based on guidelines developed in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Justice called "Death Investigation: A guide for the Scene Investigator". The Indiana course includes a specific module on Indiana law. The externship requires assistance at an autopsy with a forensic pathologist and the completion of four different death investigation reports.

All elected coroners are currently required to complete the Medicolegal Death Investigator Certification program requirement within six months after taking office; deputy coroners must complete the certification program within one year of employment. In subsequent years, each coroner and deputy coroner is required to complete an annual training course of at least eight hours duration concerning death investigations, crime scenes, and preservation of evidence at a crime scene. Any person not completing these requirements is subject to having paychecks withheld until the training requirements are met.

Explanation of State Revenues:

Background Information- Currently, if a local health department makes a charge for a certificate of death, a \$1.75 Coroner's Continuing Education Fee must be added to the established rate. (Prior to July 1, 2007, the fee was \$1.00.) The collected fees are transferred semiannually to the Treasurer of State for distribution to the nonreverting Coroner's Training and Continuing Education Fund. The fund received total revenue of \$318,825 in FY 2007 and has received \$94,050 as of November 28, 2007.

Explanation of Local Expenditures:

Explanation of Local Revenues: See *Explanation of State Revenues*.

State Agencies Affected: Indiana State Coroners Training Board.

Local Agencies Affected: County coroners; County executives or a city-county council; County auditors.

Information Sources: Lisa Barker, Executive Director, Coroner's Training Board; Rick Dowden, MD, President, Indiana Coroner's Association; 207 IAC 1 & 2; *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator*, National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

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