WEST virginia legislature

2025 regular session

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 690

By Senators Woodrum, Oliverio, Woelfel, Thorne, Clements, Hamilton, and Taylor

[Reported March 25, 2025, from the Committee on Government Organization]

A BILL to amend and reenact §7-7-1 and §7-7-4 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to authorizing county commissions to increase the compensation of elected county officials.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 7. COMPENSATION OF ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS.

§7-7-1. Legislative findings and purpose.

~~(a) The Legislature finds that it has, since January 1, 2015 , consistently and annually imposed upon the county commissioners, sheriffs, county and circuit clerks, assessors and prosecuting attorneys in each county new and additional duties by the enactment of new provisions and amendments to this code. The new and additional duties imposed upon the aforesaid county officials by these enactments are such that they would justify the increases in compensation as provided in section four of this article, without violating the provisions of section 38, article VI of the Constitution of West Virginia.~~

~~(b) The Legislature further finds that there are, from time to time, additional duties imposed upon all county officials through the acts of the Congress of the United States and that such acts constitute new and additional duties for county officials and, as such, justify the increases in compensation as provided by section four of this article, without violating the provisions of section 38, article VI of the Constitution of West Virginia.~~

~~(c) The Legislature further finds that there is a direct correlation between the total assessed property valuations of a county on which the salary levels of the county commissioners, sheriffs, county and circuit clerks, assessors and prosecuting attorneys are based, and the new and additional duties that each of these officials is required to perform as they serve the best interests of their respective counties. Inasmuch as the reappraisal of the property valuations in each county has now been accomplished, the Legislature finds that a change in classification of counties by virtue of increased property valuations will occur on an infrequent basis. However, it is the further finding of the Legislature that when such change in classification of counties does occur, that new and additional programs, economic developments, requirements of public safety and the need for new services provided by county officials all increase, that the same constitute new and additional duties for county officials as their respective counties reach greater heights of economic development, as exemplified by the substantial increases in property valuations and, as such, justify the increases in compensation provided in section four of this article, without violating the provisions of section 38, article VI of the Constitution of West Virginia.~~

~~(d)~~ (a) The Legislature ~~further~~ finds and declares that the amendments enacted to this article are intended to modify the provisions of this article so as to cause the same to be in full compliance with the provisions of the Constitution of West Virginia and to be in full compliance with the decisions of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

(b) The Legislature further finds and declares that local governments are best postured to make the fiscal determination to justify the increases in compensation provided in §7-7-4 of this code, without violating the provisions of section 38, article VI of the Constitution of the State of West Virginia.

§7-7-4. Compensation of elected county officials and county commissioners for each class of county; effective date.

(1) The increased salaries to be paid to the county commissioners and the other elected county officials described in this section on and after July 1, 2014, and on and after July 1, 2022, are set out in subsections (3), (5) and ~~(7)~~ (8) of this section. Every county commissioner and elected county official in each county, whose term of office commenced prior to or on or after July 1, 2014, shall receive the same annual salary by virtue of legislative findings ~~of extra duties~~ as set forth in §7-7-1 of this code.

~~(2) Before the increased salaries, as set out in subsections (5) and (7) and (10) of this section, are paid to the county commissioners and the elected county officials, the following requirements must be met:~~

~~(A) The Auditor has certified that the fiscal condition of the county, considering costs, revenues, liabilities, and significant trends of the same; maintenance standards; and the commitment to the provision of county services has sufficiently improved over the previous fiscal years so that there exists an amount sufficient for the payment of the increase in the salaries set out in subsections (5) and (7) of this section and the related employment taxes:~~ *~~Provided,~~* ~~That the Auditor may not provide the certification for the payment of the increase in the salaries where any proposed annual county budget contains anticipated receipts which are unreasonably greater or lesser than that of the previous year. For purposes of this subsection, the term "receipts" does not include unencumbered fund balance or federal or state grants:~~ *~~Provided, however,~~* ~~That the Auditor shall not be held liable for relying upon information and data provided by a county commission in assessing the county’s fiscal condition or a proposed annual county budget; and~~

~~(B) Each county commissioner or other elected official described in this section in office on the effective date of the increased salaries provided by this section who desires to receive the increased salary shall have prior to that date filed in the office of the clerk of the county commission his or her written request for the salary increase. The salary for the person who holds the office of county commissioner or other elected official described in this section who fails to file the written request as required by this subdivision shall be the salary for that office in effect immediately prior to the effective date of the increased salaries provided by this section until the person vacates the office or his or her term of office expires, whichever first occurs.~~

~~Any request for a salary increase shall use the following language:~~

~~I, [name of office holder], the duly elected [name of office] in and for the County of [name of county], West Virginia, do hereby request a salary increase pursuant to W. Va. Code §7-7-4 of this code, as amended. This salary increase is effective ( \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ).~~

~~[Signature of office holder]~~

~~[Date]~~

~~(3) If the Auditor has failed to certify that there is an amount sufficient for the payment of the increase in the salaries and the related employment taxes pursuant to this section, then the salaries of that county’s elected officials and commissioners shall remain at the level in effect at the time certification was sought.~~

~~(4)~~ (2) In any county having a tribunal in lieu of a county commission, the county commissioners of that county may be paid less than the minimum salary limits of the county commission for that particular class of the county.

~~(5)~~ (3) Prior to July 1, 2014:

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Class I $36,960

Class II $36,300

Class III $35,640

Class IV $34,980

Class V $34,320

Class VI $28,380

Class VII $27,720

Class VIII $25,080

Class IX $24,420

Class X $19,800

After June 30, 2014:

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Class I $41,395

Class II $40,656

Class III $39,917

Class IV $39,178

Class V $38,438

Class VI $31,786

Class VII $31,046

Class VIII $28,090

Class IX $27,350

Class X $22,176

After June 30, 2022:

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Class I $45,535

Class II $44,722

Class III $43,909

Class IV $43,096

Class V $42,282

Class VI $34,965

Class VII $34,151

Class VIII $30,899

Class IX $30,085

Class X $24,394

~~(6)~~ (4) For the purpose of determining the salaries to be paid to the elected county officials of each county, the base salaries for each county office by class, set out in subsection ~~(7)~~ (5) of this section, are established and shall be used by each county commission in determining the salaries of each of their county officials other than salaries of members of the county commission.

~~(7)~~ (5) Prior to July 1, 2014:

OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS

County Circuit Prosecuting

Sheriff Clerk Clerk Assessor Attorney

Class I $44,880 $55,440 $55,440 $44,880 $96,600

Class II $44,220 $54,780 $54,780 $44,220 $94,400

Class III $43,890 $53,460 $53,460 $43,890 $92,200

Class IV $43,560 $53,154 $53,154 $43,560 $90,000

Class V $43,230 $52,800 $52,800 $43,230 $87,800

Class VI $42,900 $49,500 $49,500 $42,900 $59,400

Class VII $42,570 $48,840 $48,840 $42,570 $56,760

Class VIII $42,240 $48,180 $48,180 $42,240 $54,120

Class IX $41,910 $47,520 $47,520 $41,910 $50,160

Class X $38,280 $42,240 $42,240 $38,280 $46,200

After June 30, 2014:

OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS

County Circuit Prosecuting

Sheriff Clerk Clerk Assessor Attorney

Class I $50,266 $62,093 $62,093 $50,266 $108,192

Class II $49,526 $61,354 $61,354 $49,526 $105,728

Class III $49,157 $59,875 $59,875 $49,157 $103,264

Class IV $48,787 $59,532 $59,532 $48,787 $100,800

Class V $48,418 $59,136 $59,136 $48,418 $98,336

Class VI $48,048 $55,440 $55,440 $48,048 $66,528

Class VII $47,678 $54,701 $54,701 $47,678 $63,571

Class VIII $47,309 $53,962 $53,962 $47,309 $60,614

Class IX $46,939 $53,222 $53,222 $46,939 $56,179

Class X $42,874 $47,309 $47,309 $42,874 $51,744

After June 30, 2022:

OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS

County Circuit Prosecuting

Sheriff Clerk Clerk Assessor Attorney

Class I $56,793 $68,302 $68,302 $56,793 $119,011

Class II $55,979 $67,489 $67,489 $55,979 $116,301

Class III $55,573 $65,863 $65,863 $55,573 $113,590

Class IV $55,166 $65,485 $65,485 $55,166 $110,880

Class V $54,760 $65,050 $65,050 $54,760 $108,170

Class VI $54,353 $60,984 $60,984 $53,853 $73,181

Class VII $53,946 $60,171 $60,171 $53,446 $69,928

Class VIII $53,540 $59,358 $59,358 $52,940 $66,675

Class IX $53,133 $58,544 $58,544 $52,533 $61,797

Class X $48,661 $52,040 $52,040 $47,811 $56,918

*Provided,* That the salary amounts used to determine any increases in compensation for public officials, as provided for in subsection (8) of this section, shall include any additional compensation received by those public officials pursuant to §7-7-6b and §11A-1-17 of this code.

~~(8)~~ (6) Any county clerk, circuit clerk, county assessor, prosecuting attorney, or sheriff of a Class I through Class V county, inclusive, any assessor or any sheriff of a Class VI through Class IX county, inclusive, shall devote full time to his or her public duties to the exclusion of any other employment: *Provided,* That any public official whose term of office begins when his or her county’s classification imposes no restriction on his or her outside activities may not be restricted on his or her outside activities during the remainder of the term for which he or she is elected.

(7) On March 1, 2026, and every second year after that, the county commission of each county shall review the annual Consumer Price Index published by the United States Department of Commerce and determine if the proposed annual county budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, has increased over the previous fiscal year in an amount sufficient for the payment of an increase in the salaries and the related employment taxes of the county commissioners and other elected county officials by no less than two percent or a percentage not to exceed the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index over the prior two years.

(8) If the proposed annual county budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, has increased over the previous fiscal year in an amount sufficient for the payment of an increase in the salaries and the related employment taxes of the county commissioner and other elected county officials in an amount up to the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index over the prior two years, then the county commission shall fix the salary of the county commissioners and the other elected county officials at an annual rate of salary to which the county official is entitled pursuant to the effective salary schedules contained in this section including an increase of no less than two percent but not to exceed the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index, as determined by the county commission: *Provided,* That any increases in compensation provided in this subsection, shall not violate the provisions of section 38, article VI of the Constitution of West Virginia.