

County Salary Budgeting Issues Following the 2022 General Assembly

May 11, 2022 Webinar



Advancing Georgia's Counties.

What did the General Assembly do?

- FY2022 Amended Budget: \$5,000 cost-of living adjustments (COLAs) for all full-time state employees
- Historically, state has awarded % COLAs

What did the General Assembly do?

State also gave \$5,000 state-funded COLAs to:

- Superior Court judges/District Attorneys;
- State-paid positions in:
 - District Attorney's offices;
 - Public Defender's offices;
 - Health Departments;
 - Library systems
- Incentive-based additional \$5,000 grants for juvenile court judge salaries (FY23 Budget) – backlogs of less than 180 days

Why do State Raises Matter to Counties?

General state law says that “*Whenever the state employees ... receive a cost-of-living increase or general performance based increase of a certain percentage or a certain amount*, the amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule [for various county officials] shall be increased by the same percentage or same amount applicable to such state employees.”

Why do State Raises Matter to Counties?

In some cases, it may not matter!

- First, compare to any “local acts”: laws of the General Assembly that apply only to your county
- *As a general rule*, county officials are entitled to the higher salary under either the local act or general state law
- Consult the county attorney on local acts and which process to follow

General Law COLAs: Which Positions are Affected?

- Members of Boards of Commissioners
- Sheriffs
- Superior Court Clerks
- Probate Judges
- Tax Commissioners
- Magistrate Judges
- Coroners (counties under 35,000 pop.)*

When do Counties have to Start Paying the Additional \$5,000?

- While state employee raises began in April 2022, *general* state law says county-funded COLAs for the above positions begin the next January 1st:
Jan. 1, 2023
- Remember to compare to local acts

When do Counties have to Start Paying the Additional \$5,000?

- *Local act* positions tied to Superior Court judges (for example):
 - Some county commissioners
 - State Court judges
- Effective date may be April 2022
- Again, look at your county's specific local acts

Coroners in Counties of 35,000+

- COLA statute for coroners specifically only applies to smaller counties
- Coroner compensation in larger counties usually covered by local act
- Medical examiners

So Many Variables! – One Size Doesn't Fit All

- Probate judges also serving as Magistrates
- Part-time Magistrates? 90% of Chief Magistrate vs. hourly rate
- Local Acts (again)

Parity Issues

- Offices with state-funded and county-funded positions:
 - DA/Public Defender
 - Superior Court
 - Library System
 - Health Dept.

- State-funded positions getting \$5,000 COLAs ... what about county-funded?

2023 Salary Guide

Stay tuned!

Questions?