



February 03, 2025

Compensation

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee
County Technical Assistance Service
226 Anne Dallas Dudley Boulevard, Suite 400
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
615.532.3555 phone
615.532.3699 fax
www.ctas.tennessee.edu

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Compensation

Reference Number: CTAS-32

There are specific statutes regarding compensation for each office. In general, though, statutes prescribe salaries according to county population classes for many officials. The General Assembly has established 17 population classes for the purpose of determining the compensation of county officers. T.C.A. § 8-24-102. This statute provides base minimum salary schedules for three categories of county officers: (1) "general officers," which include assessors of property, county clerks, clerks of court, trustees, and registers of deeds; (2) sheriffs and chief administrative officers of highway departments; and (3) county mayors. These specified minimum salaries cannot be raised or lowered except through subsequent legislation, but since they are minimum salaries, the actual salary may be increased by resolution of the county legislative body, but the class of general officers must all receive the same amount of any increase.

The minimum salaries are adjusted annually on July 1 by a dollar amount equal to the average annualized increase in state employees' compensation during the prior fiscal year multiplied by the compensation established for the county officials of the county with the median population of all counties. The adjustment cannot exceed 5 percent in any year; provided, however, the annual percentage increase in the minimum compensation of county officials shall not be less than the percentage increase established for county officials of the county with the median population of all counties. The average annualized general increase in state employees' compensation for purposes of calculating the adjustment in salary for county officials means the average increase in base salary plus the equivalent percentage increase represented by appropriated funds made available to address classification compensation issues, plus the equivalent percentage increase represented by recurring appropriation amounts provided to improve the level of retirement benefits, longevity benefits, deferred compensation benefits and other similar benefits not including health insurance benefits. These adjustments are calculated and certified by May 1 of each year by the commissioner of finance and administration. T.C.A. § 8-24-102.

Full-time county officials, not including general sessions judges, who complete the County Officials Certificate Training Program (COCTP) administered by the University of Tennessee's County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) and become a "Certified Public Administrator" may receive an annual incentive payment up to a maximum of \$1,500 from state-appropriated funds. To continue receiving these payments, certified county officials must take additional training annually. If an official receives incentive pay from the state through other professional development programs, such amounts will be offset so that no official receives more than \$1,500 of incentive pay from the state per year; provided, however, certified public administrator educational incentive payments to assessors shall not be offset by the compensation received by assessors for obtaining certain professional designations pursuant to T.C.A. §§ 67-1-508; 5-1-310(e). These amounts are subject to annual appropriations from the General Assembly and have not reached the maximum allowed by law.

County legislative bodies may appropriate additional amounts as incentive payments to county officials and employees who have become Certified Public Administrators in an amount not exceeding \$3,000 minus payments made by the state. Educational incentive pay received by an official does not affect the calculation of compensation for officials provided in other statutes. CTAS is required to submit a list to the state treasurer, by August 31 each year, of all county officers who have completed all requirements of the COCTP to attain or maintain the designation of Certified Public Administrator. This list replaces individual applications submitted by county officials for purposes of determining eligibility for the educational incentive payment. T.C.A. § 5-1-310.

Association Dues

Reference Number: CTAS-660

The county legislative body is authorized to appropriate funds for dues to associations of particular county officeholders or associations made up of groups of officeholders. If the county legislative body appropriates funds for dues for the county mayor, county highway superintendent, or members of the county legislative body, then the county legislative body is required to appropriate an amount sufficient to pay the annual dues in at least one association, up to one hundred dollars (\$100.00), for the assessor of property, county clerk, state court clerks, sheriff, register of deeds, and trustee upon their request. The county legislative body is authorized to appropriate more than one hundred dollars (\$100.00), in its discretion. None of the money appropriated can be used for lobbying activities (as defined in T.C.A. § 3-6-102) for the purpose of influencing legislation relative to benefits or salaries of the association's

members. T.C.A. § 5-9-111.

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