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Fee System or Salary System

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,

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The sheriff, trustee, county clerk, register of deeds and court clerks receive fees from the public for services they perform; for this reason, these officials are sometimes referred to as "fee officials." There are two methods of accounting for the fees received by these officers. The first and oldest is the "fee system." Under this system, each official remits to the trustee quarterly all of the fees and charges collected by the official in excess of expenses for the following items: salaries of the official's deputies and assistants, necessary expenses of the office, and the official's salary as established by statute. The official is also authorized to maintain a reserve in an amount equal to three times the monthly salaries of the official, deputies, and assistants. T.C.A. § 8-22-104. If in any month the total amount of fees and commissions are insufficient to pay the total amount of the official's salary, the salaries of deputies and assistants, plus the other expenses of the office for the month, the amount of the deficiency may be paid out of any excess fees received by the official during any preceding or succeeding months of the terms for which the official is elected. T.C.A. § 8-22-108. If the fees are insufficient to pay the regular expenses of the office, including the statutory salary of the official and the salaries of deputies and assistants, the minimum salary of the official is to be paid out of county general funds. T.C.A. § 8-24-107. Excess fees are placed in the county general fund as a source of county revenue.

The county commission is authorized to adopt an alternative system for fee officials, often called the "budget" or "salary" system, although the sheriff is always under this alternative system. T.C.A. § 8-24-103. This budget system can be adopted for some or all of the officials. T.C.A. § 8-22-104. Under this method, the official pays over to the trustee all of the fees, commissions, and charges collected by the office on a monthly basis. The county commission must, in return, budget for expenses, authorizing the trustee to pay the official's salary, salaries of deputies and assistants, and authorized expenses of the office. These salaries and other proper costs of the office are included in the budget and must be paid even if the fees are insufficient to cover them.

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