

My name is Mitch Locke. I have been a deputy coroner for 18 years, working close with Rob Ryg. I have been to hundreds of autopsies and have helped several families in Routt County. It has been an honor to serve our community. I am here today to ask that in reference to Senate Bill 22-065 that you vote to make your County Coroner position be a full time position. As you already know, the Elected Coroner's wage is set by State Legislators and not each individual county or their Commissioners. What your vote today is for, is to decide if that position will be a full time position or a part time position. When you make this decision, it will go into effect on January 1, 2023 and remain in effect through the four years of the term. Your decision will have lasting effects on the Routt County Coroner's office and your community that it serves.

It's important to understand what goes into a death investigation, how one might be handled, and all of the associated workload that goes along with each investigation. Our office has been given a 30 minute slot today to explain to you what a Coroner does and there is absolutely no way that I can squeeze all of the duties of the Coroner into that time frame.

In deciding whether you may support this bill, I would ask that you do not just consider numbers as a deciding factor, just as we don't determine the salary of the assessor based on the homes they have assessed, the treasurer on the amount of tax bills they've sent, or a commissioner on the number of constituents they talk to. We encourage you to support this bill based on the profession and overall work-load of the Coroner and the role the coroner plays in your community, not just today, but years from now.

A normal full time work week is 40 hours per week which calculates to 2080 hours per person, per year. The coroner's office covers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. That's 8760 hours a year.

Our case load is going up and continues rise. Last year the coroners office did 42 cases. As of September 22, 2022 we are at 41 cases.

Routt county is 2,368sq miles and the drive time to a scene, as well as the time and means it can take us to get to the decedent from where the road ends, can be very lengthy. On paper, it looks like a full time and a part time could cover that. However that is untrue. To begin with an on call shift at the Coroner's office is for 24 hours. If you work one on call shift, you have worked 24 hours. If you work 2 on call shifts, you have worked 48 hours but there are still 5 more days of on call shifts that need to be covered in a week. The cases are becoming more demanding. There is so much more involved in a death investigation today than even 5 years ago. The knowledge that a Coroner needs to run the office is extensive. They must be well versed in the medical conditions and terminology, must have a working knowledge of law enforcement and law, must understand crisis counseling, be an office administrator, and be physically and mentally able to handle the job. There are more rules, regulations, and statutes governing how a case is handled. Death has no schedule. It doesn't care if it's a horrible snow storm, Christmas day, a heatwave, or the Super Bowl. It can be during normal working hours or in the middle of the night. It can be two doors down, deep in the back country or in

the water. There are also the situations where we are subpoenaed to court and unable to schedule ourselves to take on call.

The Coroner's job is absolutely a full time position just as the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Assessor are. We not only cover the daytime hours these offices cover but we are more like the Sheriff that covers every minute of every day. Again, death has no schedule. The Coroner works closely with the District Attorney, Law Enforcement, FBI, CBI, US Marshalls, County Attorney, EMS, doctors, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, fire departments, animal control, child protective services, public health, search and rescue, clerk and recorder, CDC, anthropologists, archeologists, entomologists, forensic pathologists, Donor Alliance, insurance companies, OSHA, toxicology labs, media, other Coroner offices, funeral homes and most importantly the families of the deceased.

The Coroner has to draw blood and urine from a decedent and assist the forensic pathologist with an autopsy if necessary. They have to be able to prepare the budget, be knowledgeable about personnel rules and policies. They have to be able to read, analyze and interpret professional journals, technical procedures and governmental regulations, comprehend medical charts, and convert levels of medications and mathematically compute toxicology results. They are required to complete mandatory state reports such as the Colorado Fatality Analysis Reporting, the Colorado Violent Death reporting, the Colorado Unintentional Death Reporting, Center for Fatality Review & Prevention Reporting, SUIDI, OSHA, FAA, Child Fatality, and several other entities.

**We are also called to testify in court. All these things take time** and preparation. I haven't even began to touch on the fact the Coroner is responsible to keep up on all of the newest drugs and fads and pass that information on to their Deputies. It is a constant job to keep the deputies up-to-date and trained in all aspects of the job including investigations and most importantly, to keep the deputies safety in highest regard with everything going on in our world today.

Thank you for your time today. I know that Supporting Senate Bill 22-065 will go a long way in making sure that Routt County has qualified, competent coroners for many years to come.

Thank you,

Mitch Locke, Routt County Coroner