

What ARE These Offices That Are Being Elected?

FEDERAL

U.S. Congress in general: The legislative branch, established by Article I of the Constitution, consists of the Senate and House of Representatives. Congress makes laws, declares war, controls federal spending, and approves or rejects presidential appointments. Congress alone controls the federal “power of the purse.”

U.S. Senate: Two senators represent each state, regardless of population. Senators serve six-year terms.

U.S. House: Representation is based on state population. Members serve two-year terms, and all federal tax bills must originate in the House. Congressional districts are normally redrawn after each 10-year census.

TEXAS STATE OFFICES

Governor: Texas has a relatively limited executive branch, but the governor appoints agency heads and university regents, so the longer in office, the more power, due to all these appointments.

Lieutenant Governor: The presiding officer of the Texas Senate and one of the most powerful elected officials in the state. The lieutenant governor appoints Senate committees and controls which bills receive consideration.

Attorney General: The state’s chief legal officer. The AG represents Texas in legal matters, provides legal guidance to state agencies, and handles criminal and civil enforcement responsibilities.

Comptroller: Texas’s chief financial officer, tax collector and revenue estimator. The comptroller tracks state finances and estimates how much money is available for the state budget.

Railroad Commissioner: Despite the name, this office has nothing to do with railroads. The Railroad Commission regulates oil, natural gas and related energy industries, including drilling, pipelines, natural-gas utilities, environmental requirements and abandoned wells.

Agriculture Commissioner: Oversees programs involving agriculture, food safety, pesticides, seeds, animal health, school meals, rural health and emerging agricultural industries.

Texas Legislature in general: Meets for 140 days in odd-numbered years. The governor can call special sessions.

State Senate: Texas has 31 senators, elected from districts based on population. Senators serve four-year terms.

State House: Texas has 150 representatives serving two-year terms. They write laws and begin the state budget process.

State Board of Education: Sets K–12 academic standards, graduation requirements and instructional-material policies; oversees the Permanent School Fund and approves certain charter schools.

COUNTY OFFICES

County Judge: The county's chief executive and administrative officer and presiding officer of Commissioners Court, with one vote like each commissioner. Also coordinates emergency management and may have limited judicial duties.

County Commissioner: Serves on Commissioners Court, which governs the county. Commissioners help set the budget, approve contracts and spending, and oversee roads, buildings, parks, libraries and other county services.

Criminal District Attorney: Prosecutes felony and misdemeanor cases, works with law enforcement, presents felony cases to grand juries, represents the county in civil matters and handles certain protective and mental-health proceedings.

County Treasurer: Manages county finances, including revenues, payments, investments, bank accounts, payroll and financial reporting.

County Clerk: Maintains county records, vital statistics and court records and, in some counties, serves as chief elections officer. Hays County has a separate Elections Office.

District Clerk: Maintains records for District Courts, manages juries, collects court fees and handles official court documents for civil, family, juvenile and felony criminal cases.

Constable: An elected peace officer who serves as a chief process server for Justice Courts and also provides law enforcement.

TEXAS JUDICIAL OFFICES

Texas judges are elected.

Supreme Court: Texas's highest court for civil and juvenile cases. It has one chief justice and eight associate justices, elected statewide to staggered six-year terms.

Court of Criminal Appeals: Texas's highest court for criminal cases, including automatic review of death-penalty cases and certain post-conviction claims.

District Courts: Primary trial courts for serious civil and criminal matters, including felony cases, major civil cases, family law and election contests.

County Courts-at-Law: Statutory courts that help handle county caseloads, generally hearing serious misdemeanors and certain civil, family, probate and other matters.

Justice of the Peace: Handles Class C misdemeanors, minor civil cases, landlord/tenant disputes, truancy, warrants, bail and other magistrate duties. JPs may also conduct inquests and marriage ceremonies. They are not required to be attorneys.