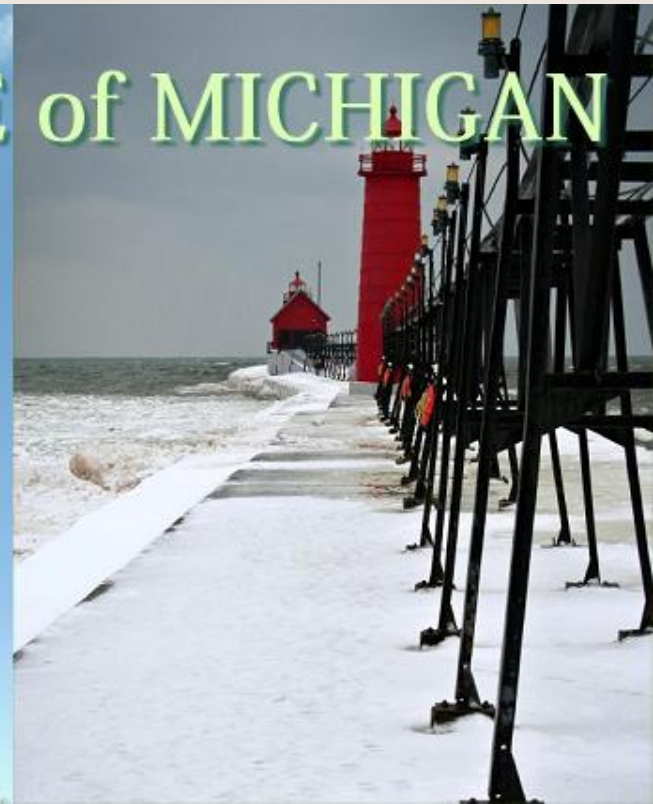
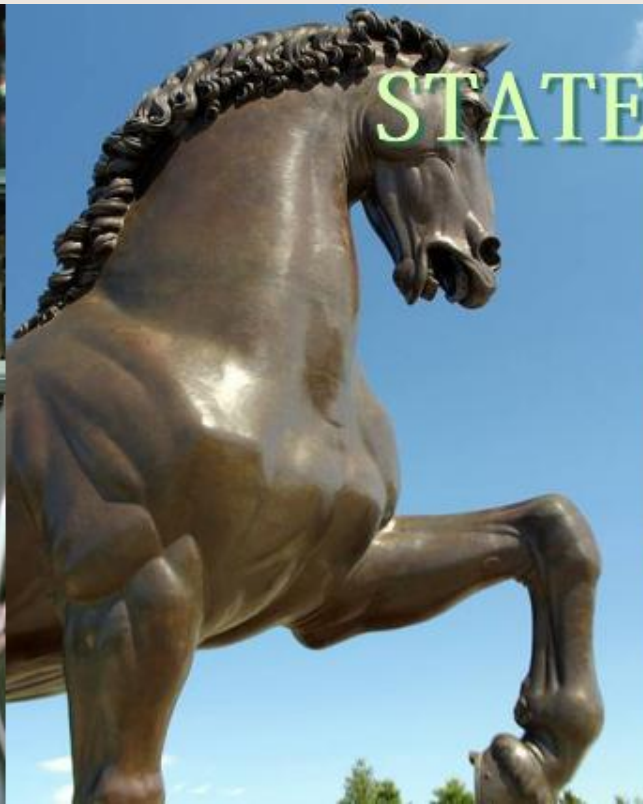


# County Government Overview

Operation Bentley 2010

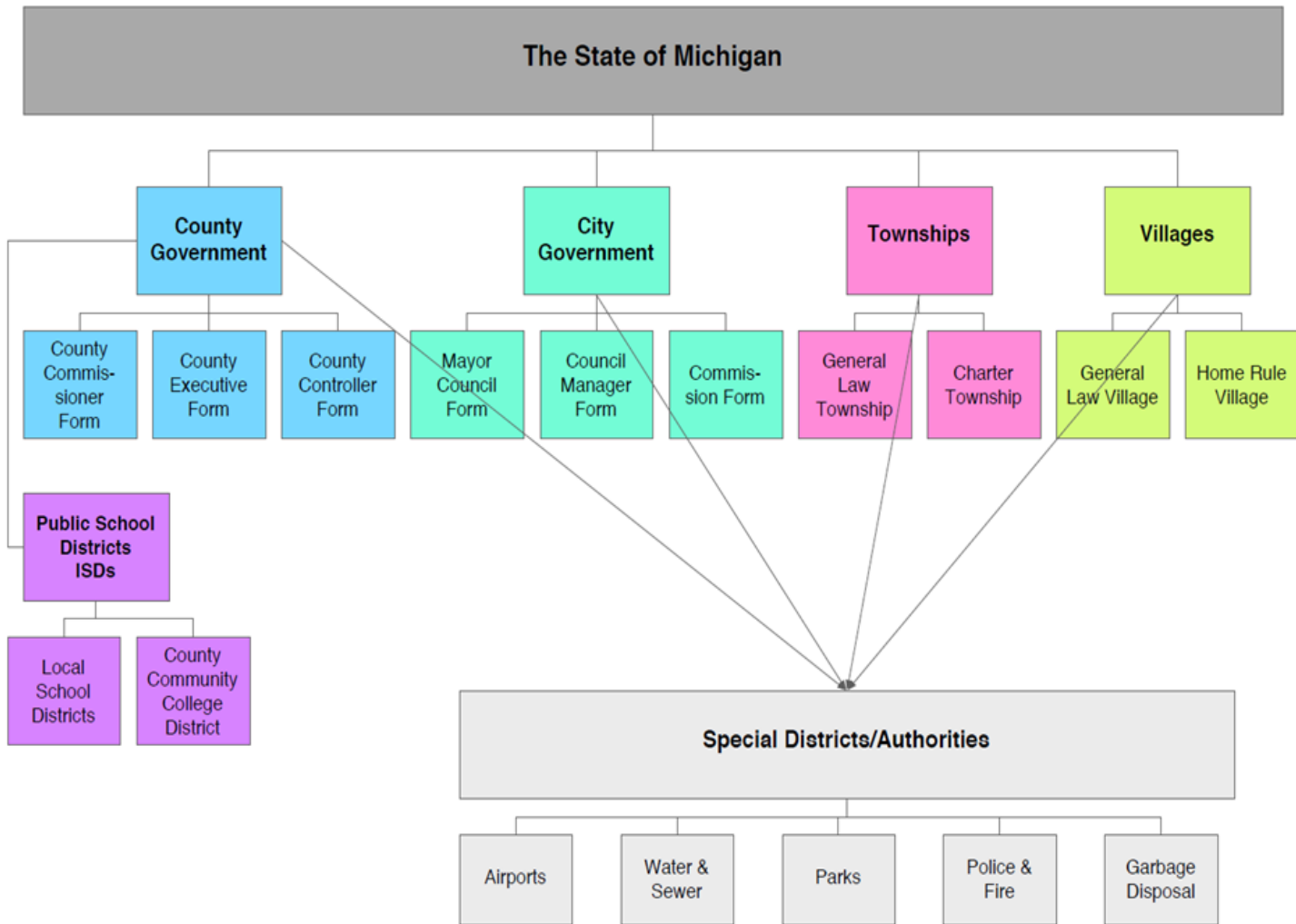


STATE of MICHIGAN

# WHAT IS A COUNTY?

- In the US, a state county is one of the districts a state is divided into for purposes of local government, except in Louisiana, which is divided into parishes, and Alaska which is divided into boroughs.

### Types of local government in Michigan.



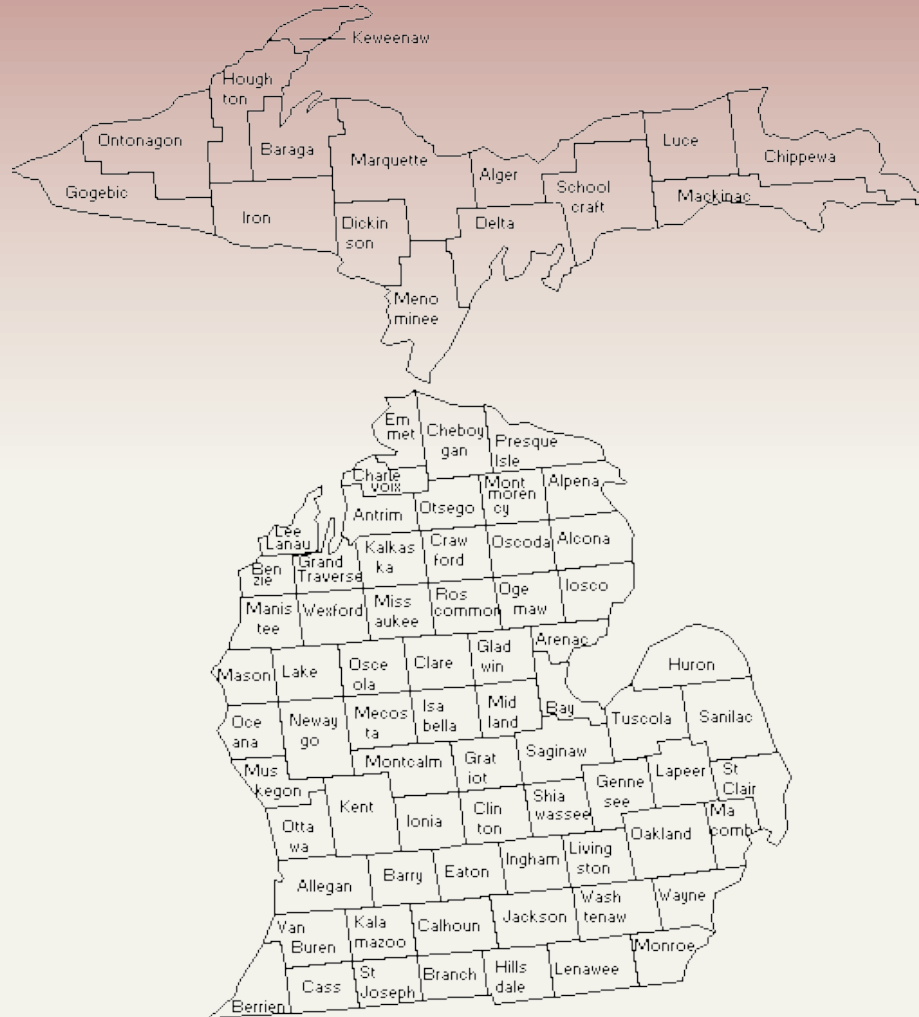
# HISTORY – 1700's

- 1785 – Northwest Ordinance
  - MI surveyed into 6 mi. sq. sections
- 1787 – Northwest Ordinance
  - Township and County governance approved for use in Northwest Territory
- 1796 – Wayne County established as 1<sup>st</sup> county in Northwest Territory

# HISTORY – 1800's, 1900's

- 1805 – MI Territory established; counties organized for judicial purposes
- 1835 – Michigan Constitution required elected offices for county government; “cooperative county-township” system
- 1960s – County Commissioners first required to be elected from districts of equal population

# 83 Counties in Michigan



*Michigan's counties range in size from 321 square miles for Benzie County to 1,821 square miles for Marquette County. Michigan's county populations range in density from 4 persons per square mile for Keweenaw County to 3,356 persons per square mile for Wayne County.*



# FUN FACTS – County Names

- County names begin with every letter except for X. Although you may think your county's name is unique, there is a 56 percent chance that in another state, there is a county by that same name, spelled exactly the same way.
- A large percentage of counties were named after presidents and historical figures. Washington County, the most common county name, can be found in 30 states. Only 8, including Nixon and Bush, cannot be found as county names.
- Animal named counties are found across the country, although none in Michigan. There are counties named Beaver, Buffalo, Elk, Antelope, Bee, Caribou, Eagle, Manatee, and Otter Tail.
- Most county names are only one word. The longest county name (14 letters) is a tie between Northumberland County, Pennsylvania and Northumberland County, Virginia.

--Source: [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)

# How are Counties Organized?

- Grouping of Governments instead of single government
- MI Constitution requires 5 elected officials:
  - Prosecutor
  - Sheriff
  - Clerk
  - Register of Deeds
  - Treasurer



# How are Counties Organized?

- Additional Legislation provides for:
  - Drain Commissioner
  - Other statutory boards appointed by County Board (i.e. parks, mental health, etc.)
- MI Constitution sets forth separate authority of District and Circuit Courts
- County Road Commissions are autonomous governmental entities
- Board of Commissioners has budget authority over ALL county offices

# County Commissioners

(Calhoun County Example: 2009-10)



Front (L-R): Vice Chair Terris Todd (D) – District 2; Chair Mike Rae (D)–District 4; Lisa Gerow (D)–District 1  
Back (L-R): Julie Camp (R)–District 5; Jim Haadsma (D)–District 3; Kirk Lee (D)–District 7; Becky Rocho (D)–District 6

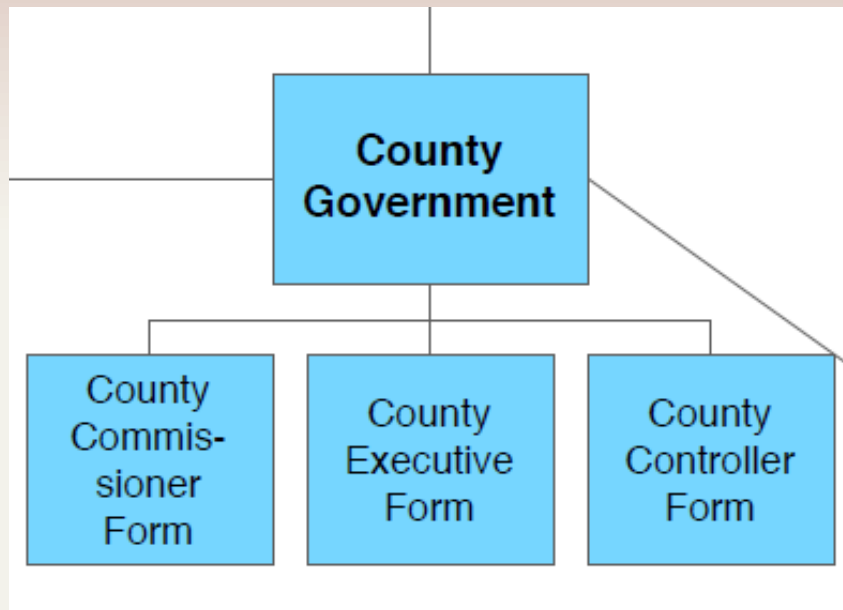
- Governing Bodies
- Set Policies
- Hire Administrators
- Set Budgets
- Elected for 2-yr Terms, ALL at once
- Elected on a Political Party basis (Democrat, Republican, Independent, etc.)
- Typically number 5 to 25 members in different counties

# Politics...

*“The Democrats are the party that says government will make you smarter, taller, richer, and remove the crabgrass on your lawn. The Republicans are the party that says government doesn't work and then they get elected and prove it.”*

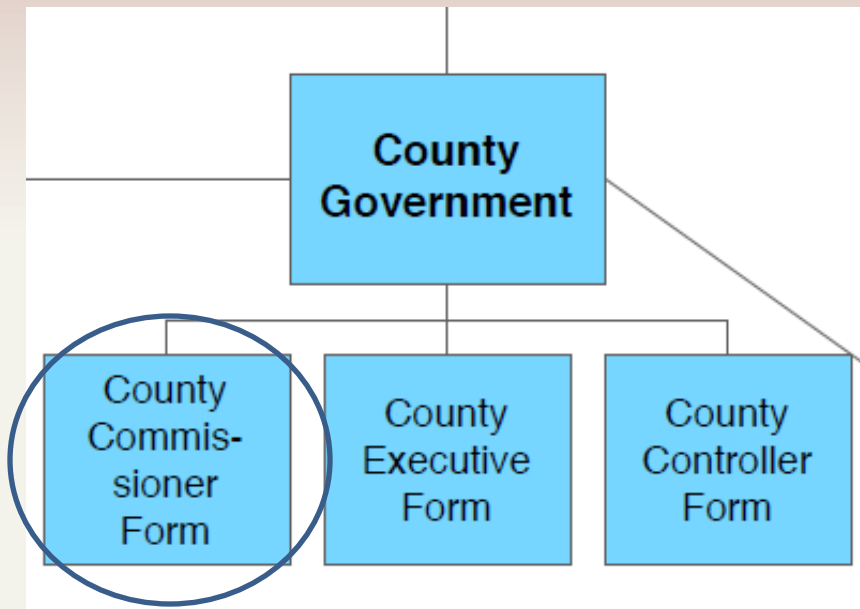
*--[P.J. O'Rourke](#)*

# WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION?



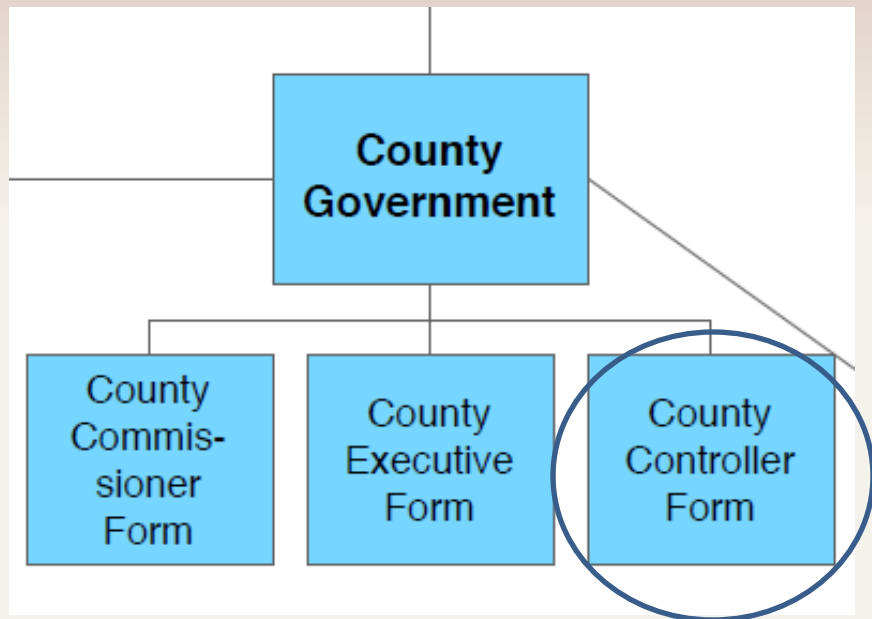
- *County administration can take various forms, all allowed for by separate state laws or statutes.*

# WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION?



- Commissioner Form
  - 80 counties use this
  - Boards act in legislative AND administrative roles
  - Can hire County Administrator
  - Administrator's authority limited by policy and employment agreements

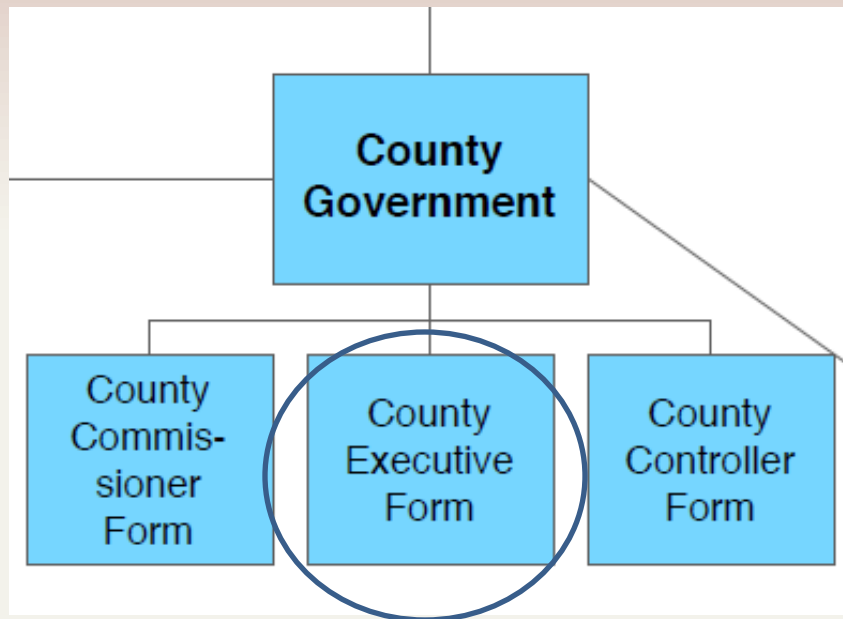
# WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION?



- Controller Form
  - Allowed by yet another statute
  - Controller is Chief Accounting Officer, oversees county-wide administrative functions
  - Some counties have “Administrator/Controller”

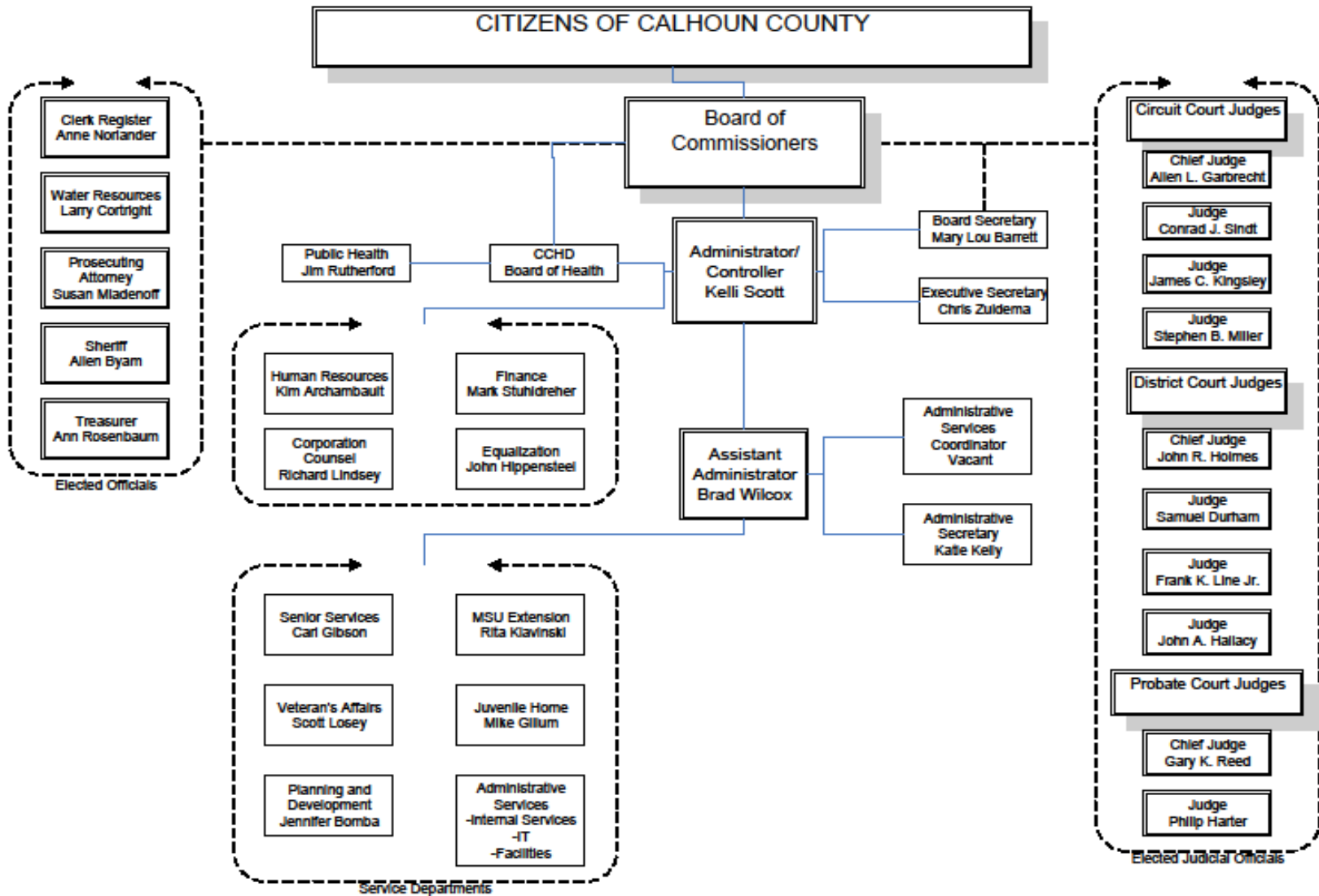


# WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION?



- Executive/Unified Forms
  - Fairly New (1966/1972/1980)
  - Board is purely legislative
  - County Executive either elected or appointed; has administrative authority
  - Only a few counties in MI (Wayne, Bay, Oakland)

# CALHOUN COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART MARCH 2009



# Why were County Governments Formed?

Formed to centralize administrative functions of state government and to address needs of citizens. Responsibilities have remained much the same through the years.

- Equalization of taxes
- Election oversight
- Records of persons and property
- Licensing
- Roads
- Care of rural lands and populations
- Provision of health and social services

*--Source: State and Local Government Program, MSU Extension*

# What Authority does County Government Have?

## Powers conferred by the state

- Must be directly authorized by constitution or law
- Must be “related to county affairs”
- Must not interfere in local affairs
- Must be consistent with state law

*--Source: State and Local Government  
Program, MSU Extension*

# WHAT DOES COUNTY GOVERNMENT PROVIDE?

- County services are categorized as “Mandated” or “Discretionary.”
- Mandated Services – required by either state constitution or state statute (counties act as grassroots arm of the state)
- Discretionary Services – counties are empowered by various statutes to do other stuff

# Top County Mandated Services

1. Trial Courts
2. Constitutional Officers
  - + Sheriff
  - + Prosecutor
  - + Treasurer
  - + Clerk/Register of Deeds
  - + Water Resources/Drain
3. County Jail
4. Youth Rehab, Foster Care, Juvenile Justice
5. Friend of the Court
6. Public Health Dept
7. Mental Health
8. Economic Development
9. Court Reporters
10. Solid Waste Planning
11. Veterans' Relief Fund
12. County Medical Care Facility



# Some County Discretionary Services

- Parks & Recreation
- MSU Extension Offices
- Airports
- Secondary Road Patrol
- Animal Control

# How might YOU Interact with County Government?

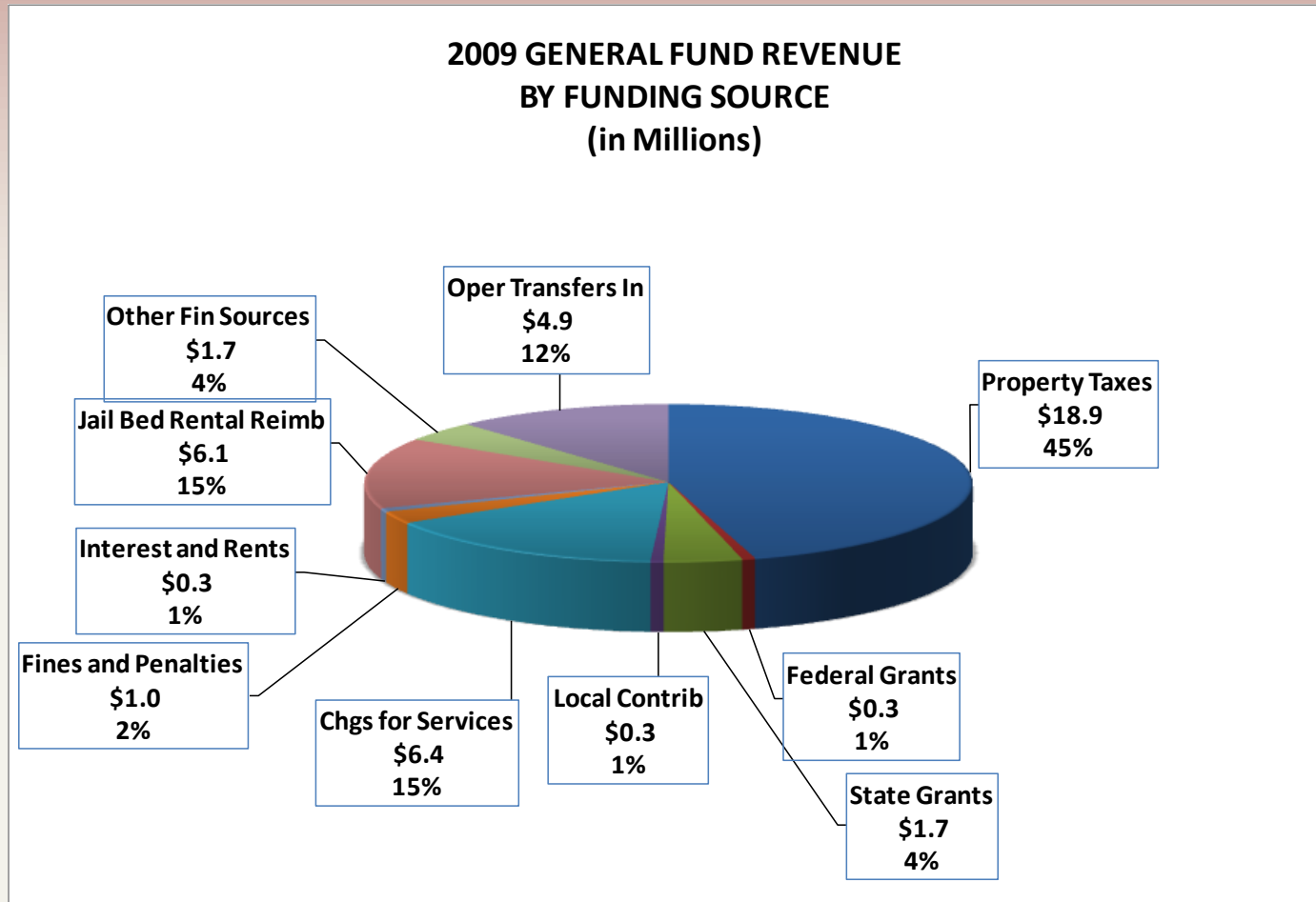
- Get Vital Records – Marriage, Birth, Death Certificates
- Look Up Property Maps & Info
- View Restaurant Inspection Reports
- Work for County Government
- Be a Vendor
- Vote for Commissioner
- Run for Election

- Come to Board Meetings
- Report a Drain Problem
- Report Smoking Law Violations
- Pay Delinquent Property Tax Bills
- Go to Court
- Pay Tickets, Fines, Fees
- Go to Jail (hopefully not!!)

# How are Counties Funded?

## Calhoun County example

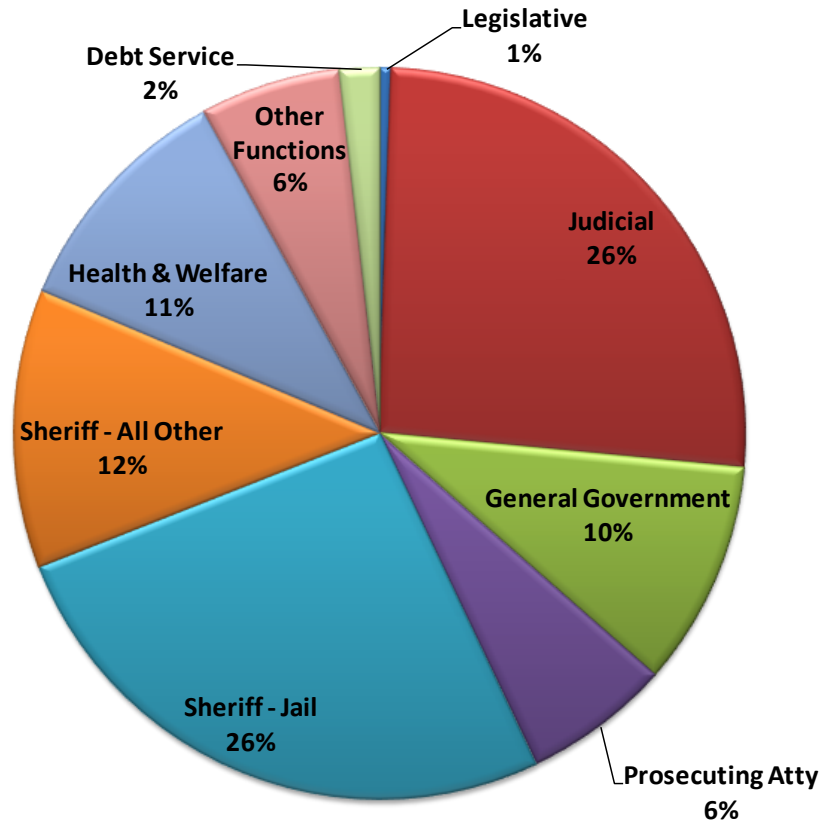
(\$40 Mil. Total)



# What do Counties Pay For?

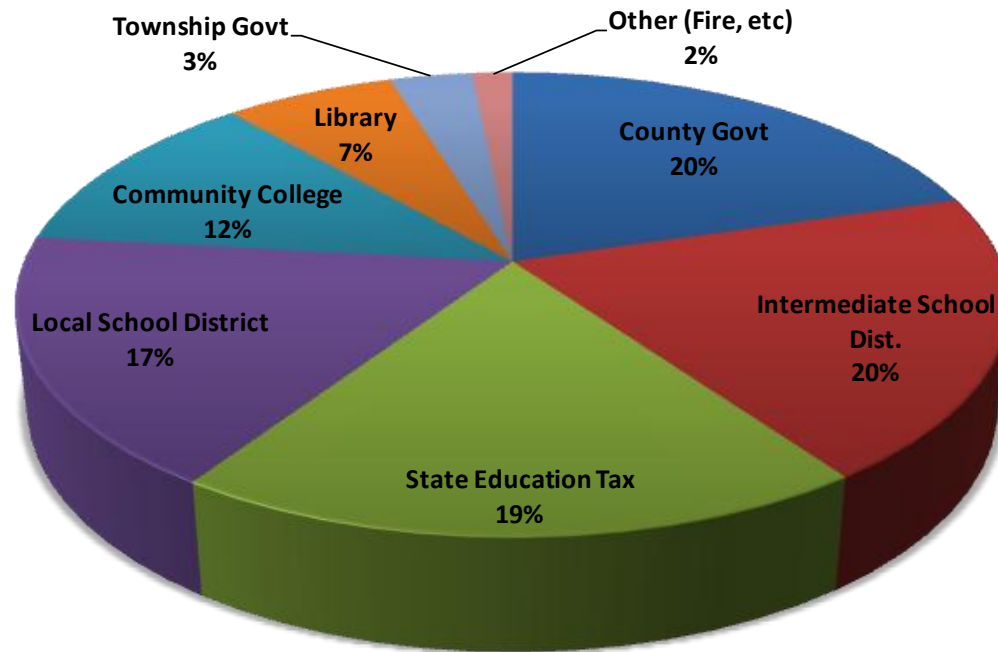
## Calhoun County example (\$40 Mil. Total)

2009 General Fund Budget by Function



# Where do your Property Taxes Go?

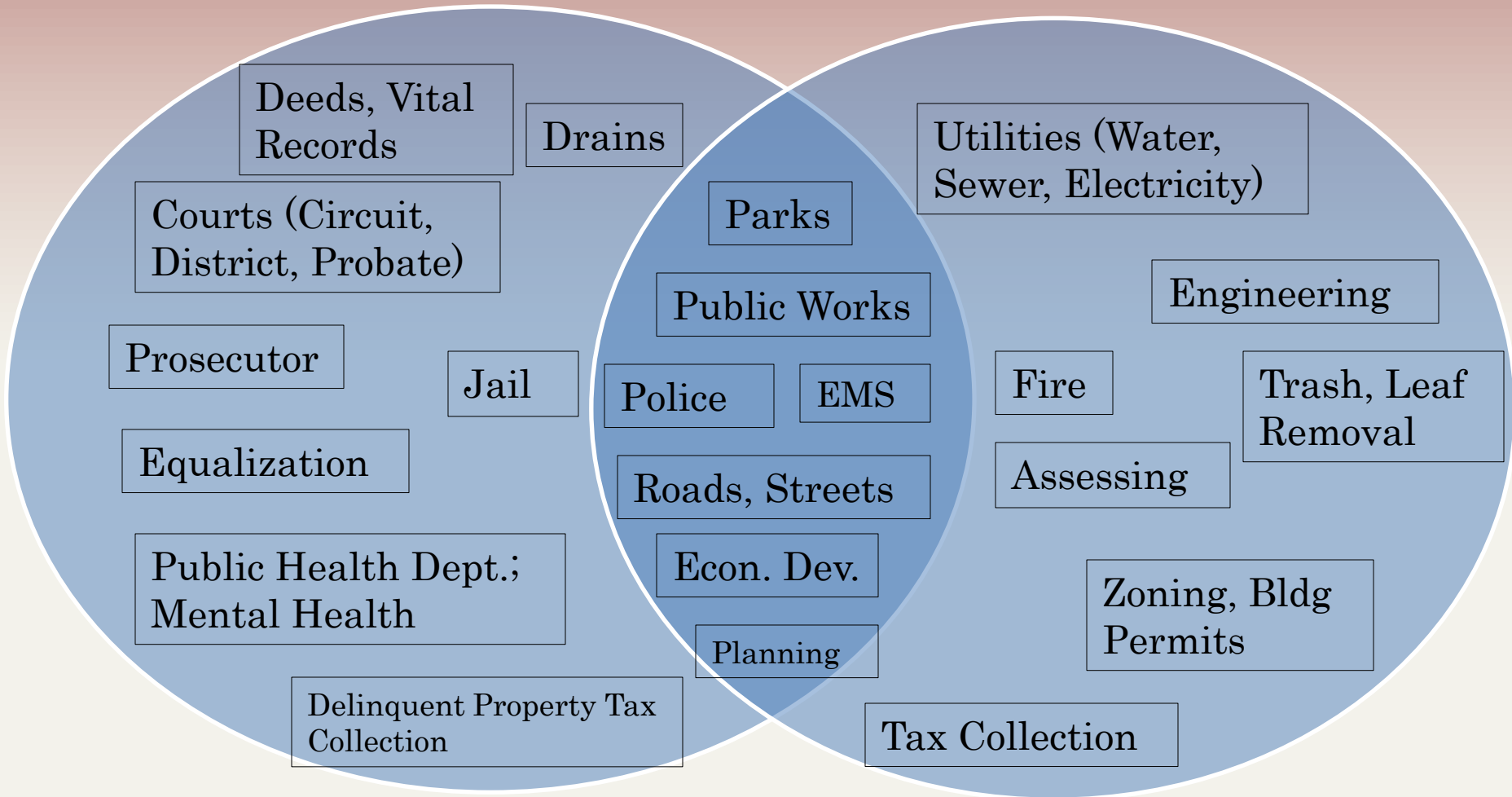
**Sample Property Tax Distribution**  
**Township Resident with \$1,500 annual Tax Bill**



*Eckford Twp, MI, 2009  
equalization data*

*Property Tax bills vary depending on the total millage rate in your school district. In this example, the owner of a \$100,000 valued home pays approx. \$300 per year toward county government operations.*

# COUNTIES VS. CITIES





# CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Counties have their greatest effect on unincorporated lands (i.e. townships), and can provide service including law enforcement, road maintenance and construction, justice administration, and health care, among other basic services.
- Where places within the county are incorporated (i.e. cities), and thus granted home rule, the power of the county government is greatly diminished.

# CURRENT ISSUES, TRENDS

- State's Budget Crisis – many impacts on counties
- Legislative Changes – 2010 is a BIG Election Year!!
- Economic Recession — Real estate market and low inflation rates hurt property tax revenue; demands for services increase (foreclosures, unemployment, etc.)
- Operating Budgets – Long term structural problem mainly due to revenue losses
- Increasing Capability to offer Online Services
- Intergovernmental Cooperation – examples include consolidated 911 dispatch, joint planning and zoning, contracts with sheriff for local police services

# SUGGESTED WEB SITES

- <http://www.naco.org/> (National Association of Counties)
- <http://mich.info/michigan/counties/county.htm> (Michigan Start Pages)
- <http://www.micounties.org/> (Michigan Association of Counties)

# Q & A

Thank you!! For more information:

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