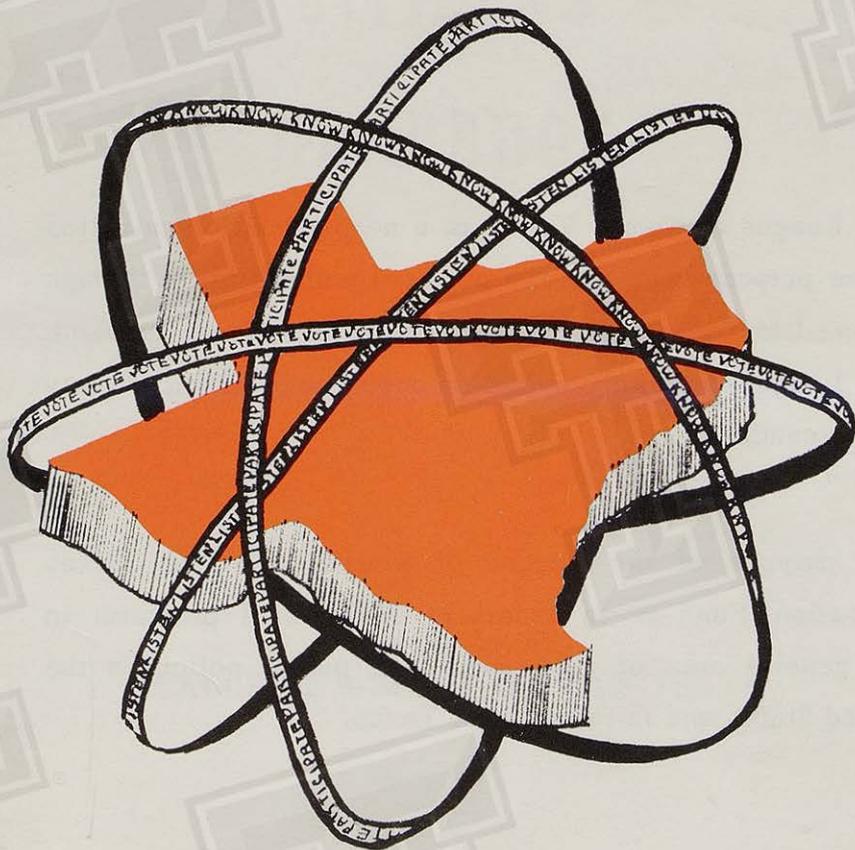


League of Women Voters of Texas



**A
CITIZENS
HANDBOOK**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate.

The purpose of the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund is to undertake educational programs in the general area of government and public policy in the United States and in the state of Texas.

February 1970

A
CITIZENS
HANDBOOK

A guide for responsive Texas citizenship

Prepared by the
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

Published by the
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS EDUCATION FUND
1416 Royal Oaks Drive
Waco, Texas 76710

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INTRODUCTION

Every citizen is inescapably involved in and affected by government; and what every citizen says and does, or does not say and do, inescapably affects government.

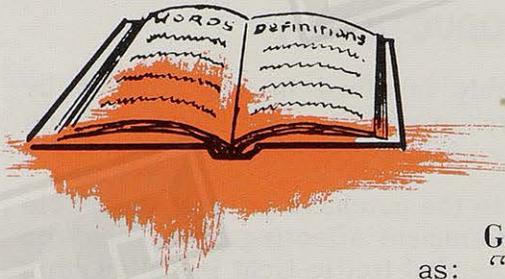
When a sales tax is added to the purchase price of an article you are buying, this is government affecting you. When you succeed in getting a much needed traffic light installed, this is you affecting government. The act of governing can be considered a partnership with both partners — you and the government — sharing the responsibility for good government.

In this handbook we are primarily concerned with the responsibility assumed by you, the citizen, for good government. Since our system of government is one of representative government, the final responsibility is that of the citizen. An active role on the part of the citizen will help to make government strong and effective. Inaction on the part of the citizen has just as much effect, adversely, making government weak and ineffective.

This handbook is designed as a guide to active citizenship. Its contents include information on:

- (1) how to qualify to take an active part in government;
- (2) how elections are conducted and the procedures for voting;
- (3) the role of political parties in government and how to be active in the party of your choice;
- (4) the functions and responsibilities of the several levels of government;
- (5) the officials responsible for the administration of government; and
- (6) how to communicate with your elected officials.

It is hoped that your interest in government will be stimulated and that you will be more able, and willing, to assume your share of the partnership in responsible government by being informed, by voting, by working in your party, by expressing your opinions. Government can be as good as you, the politically active citizen, demand; or it can be as bad as you, the politically inactive citizen, let it be.



TOWARD A MORE PERFECT UNDERSTANDING

Government may be defined as: "the continuous exercise of authority over and the performance of functions for a political unit; the body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization."

Politics may be defined as: "the art or science of government; the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy."

The political units that make up government are: (1) the United States, or federal government; (2) Texas, or state government; (3) the county; (4) the city or town; and (5) the special district, i.e., an independent school district, or a water district.

Both the federal and state governments are divided into three branches with specific powers given to each branch: (1) the executive branch – the branch that administers the government and sees that the laws are enforced; (2) the legislative branch – the branch that makes the laws; and (3) the judicial branch – the branch that administers the rule of law in society.

The other governments, county, city or town, and special district, are considered to be local governments, although they function under authority granted by the state. The county is also considered to be an agent of the state since it carries out such functions for the state as conducting elections, levying and collecting taxes, maintaining law and order, and dispensing justice.

The body of persons which is the governing authority of a political unit is made up of those persons elected by the voters within that political unit to administer the government.

These elected officers are the ones who are usually considered to be involved in politics, the ones who are knowledgeable in "the art and science of government." However, those who are "concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy" should be each and every citizen.

VOTING INFORMATION

Municipality				Voter Registration Certificate			
Precinct		Party Affiliation		Tax Assessor-Collector		Voting Age	
Bell County				Roland P. Boker		007	
Certificate No. 015905		Social Security No. 452 46 925		Birth Pl. Texas		Native Nat. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Age 49		Sex F		Race W		DATE	
MARCH 1 1991		LEADER OF RESIDENCE		DATE		DATE	
I CERTIFY THE ABOVE IS TRUE AND CORRECT		Y/N		DATE		DATE	
Jane Q. Citizen							

Qualifications for Voting. A person is considered qualified to vote in all elections, including general, special, and primary elections, if he is: (1) at least twenty-one years of age; (2) a citizen of the United States; (3) a resident of Texas for one year; (4) a resident of the county, or city for municipal elections, for six months; (5) a resident of the precinct; (6) registered to vote; and (7) if he has not been disqualified by having been convicted of a felony or adjudged to be mentally incompetent.

An additional qualification for a person voting in a bond election is that he must own property that is taxed. This does not need to be real estate, but can be an item of personal property that appears on the tax rolls, such as an automobile or household furniture.

Registration. Any person who at the time of applying for registration is qualified, or who will become qualified within the voting year, March 1 through February 28, is entitled to register to vote.

Each voter is required to register annually with the county tax assessor-collector of his county of residence. The registration period is from October 1 through January 31. Each annual registration entitles the registrant to vote at elections held during the one-year period beginning on the March 1 following the registration period. There is no charge for registration.

A person who is not yet twenty-one but who will become twenty-one during the voting year, or a new resident who will have completed the residence requirements during the voting year, may register during the regular registration period. The voter registration certificate issued to such a registrant will bear a notation of the date on which he will be eligible to vote. Provision is also made for registration throughout the voting year, up to thirty days before the end of the voting year, by persons becoming twenty-one

after the last day of the registration period (January 31) and by persons moving into the state after the first day of the registration period (October 1).

A newly naturalized citizen, if otherwise qualified, may register throughout the voting year, up to four days before the end of the voting year. He must present proof of his naturalization and the date thereof.

A person may apply for registration in person or by mail, but each applicant must submit a written application which gives the information required by law. The husband, wife, father, mother, son, or daughter of a person entitled to register may act as agent for such person, so long as the agent is a qualified elector of the county.

Each application for registration will include the following information: (1) applicant's name, sex, and address; (2) applicant's age; if the applicant is not yet twenty-one, the application will show his birth date; (3) a statement that the applicant meets the residence requirements; or, if not, a statement of the date upon which he became a resident of the state, county, or city, as the case may be; (4) a statement that the applicant is a citizen of the United States; and (5) if the application is made by an agent, a statement of the agent's relationship to the applicant. The application form will have a space for showing the election precinct number, and it may have a space for the applicant's Social Security number.

Absentee Voting. Absentee voting is conducted by two methods in all elections: (1) voting by personal appearance at the clerk's* office, and (2) voting by mail. Any qualified voter who expects to be absent from the county, or who because of sickness, physical disability, or religious belief cannot appear at the polls on election day, may vote absentee.

If a qualified voter expects to be absent from the county on election day, he may vote absentee by appearing in person at the clerk's office during the period beginning on the twentieth day (tenth day for second primary election) and ending on the fourth day before an election to cast his ballot. Any other person entitled to vote absentee may also vote by personal appearance if he is able to appear at the clerk's office during this period.

*The term "clerk" means the clerk of the political subdivision conducting the election, such as the county clerk for county, district, and state elections; or the city clerk for municipal elections.

A qualified voter may vote by mail:

(1) if he expects to be absent from the county during the period of absentee voting, as well as on the day of the election, by making application in writing to the clerk for an absentee ballot. Application forms are available at the clerk's office. The applicant must state why he is entitled to vote absentee, must give an address outside the county to which the ballot is to be mailed, and must enclose his voter registration certificate, or affidavit of loss;

(2) if he is sick or physically disabled and unable to appear in person at the polls on the day of the election, by making application in writing to the clerk for an absentee ballot. The applicant must state why he is entitled to vote absentee, and must give the address to which the ballot is to be mailed, which must be either his permanent address or the address at which he is temporarily living; he must enclose his voter registration certificate, or affidavit of loss, as well as a certificate from a duly licensed physician or chiropractor, or an accredited Christian Science practitioner, certifying to such sickness or physical disability. Expected or likely confinement for childbirth on election day is sufficient ground to vote absentee because of sickness or physical disability.

If a qualified voter's religious belief prohibits him from voting during any part of the time during which the polls are open on election day, he may vote absentee by personal appearance or by mail.

Application for an absentee ballot by mail may be made not more than sixty days before the election and must be received in the clerk's office not later than the fourth day before the election. The marked and notarized ballot must be returned *by mail* and be postmarked not later than midnight of the day before the election and must be received in the clerk's office before 1:00 P.M. on election day.

If a voter to whom an absentee ballot has been mailed returns to the county of his residence before receiving or returning the ballot, and will be in the county on election day, he may vote at his regular polling place after first notifying the clerk *in writing* to void his application for an absentee ballot. Or, if the voter will not be present in the county on election day, but will be present during the period for absentee voting by personal appearance, he may cast an absentee ballot by personal appearance, after first notifying the clerk to void his application for an absentee ballot by mail.

The Limited Ballot. A person who is otherwise qualified to vote in Texas, but has lived in his present county less than six months, may still vote for national and state offices and on statewide propositions by using a limited ballot. Permission to use a limited ballot is obtained by making a written, signed application on an official form furnished by the county clerk. A limited ballot is voted in the same manner and during the same period as though it were an absentee ballot, either by personal appearance or by mail.

A person who has lived in Texas for more than sixty days but less than one year before a presidential election, and who would have been eligible to vote in another state, may vote for presidential and vice presidential electors. Between sixty and forty-five days before the election he must apply *in person* to the county clerk for a ballot. After he is notified that his application has been accepted, he is entitled to vote by appearing in person at the office of the county clerk between the fifteenth and fourth days before the election to cast his ballot.

Voting by Members of the Armed Forces, Etc. The following categories of persons who are otherwise qualified to vote in Texas, but are not registered, may still vote absentee by mail upon making application on an official federal post card application for absentee ballot, provided the application is mailed from outside the county and the ballot is to be mailed to an address outside the county: (1) a member of the armed forces of the United States while in active service, his spouse and dependents; (2) a member of the merchant marine of the United States, his spouse and dependents; and (3) a citizen of the United States who is a resident of Texas but is temporarily living outside the territorial limits of the United States.

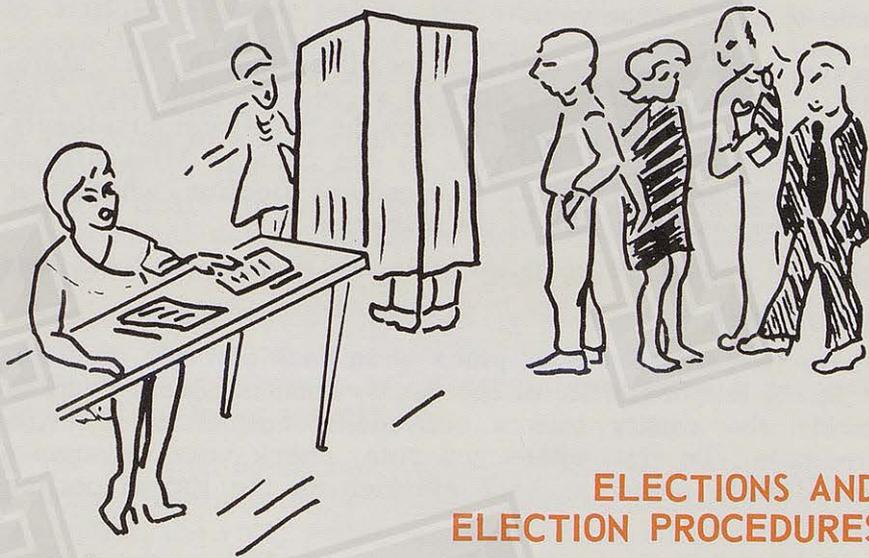
Any person who came within one of the above categories at any time on or after January 1 may register at any time after the close of the regular registration period and before the end of the voting year.

Lost Voter Registration Certificate. A lost voter registration certificate cannot be replaced. But if a voter has lost his registration certificate, he may still vote in any election by signing an affidavit to that effect at the polls on election day, or in his application for an absentee ballot, if he is voting absentee.

Moving to a New Residence. If a voter moves to another

county or to another election precinct in the same county, and is otherwise qualified, he may vote in the precinct of his new residence by presenting his registration certificate to the judge of the election, unless his new precinct is in a city of more than 10,000 population.

In cities of over 10,000 he may vote in the precinct of his new residence only if not less than four days before the election he has taken or mailed his registration certificate, with his new address, to the county tax assessor-collector, so that his name may be added to the list of registered voters for that precinct.



ELECTIONS AND ELECTION PROCEDURES

Primary Elections. The primary election is an election held by an organized political party for the purpose of nominating its candidates to be voted on at a general election. It is administered and paid for by the party holding the primary.

Any political party whose candidate for governor received at least 200,000 votes in the last general election must hold a primary election. Only party members may vote in the primary election and take part in other party activities. A person becomes a party member by voting in that party's primary election. Anyone voting in a primary election must possess the qualifications for voting, including registration, as outlined in the section *Voting Information*.

Primary elections are held on the first Saturday in May in even-numbered years. To be nominated, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast for all candidates for that office; that is, he must receive at least half of the votes cast plus one. If no candidate receives a majority, a second primary is held the first Saturday in June. At that time the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for that office are placed on the ballot. The one receiving the highest number of votes in the second primary is then declared to be the nominee.

Parties not required to hold primary elections nominate their candidates at conventions held on the second Saturday in June of the election year.

General Elections. Officers for all county, district, state, and national offices are elected at general elections. The general election is administered by the county commissioners court, and the costs are paid by the county. All qualified voters are eligible to vote in a general election, whether or not they voted in any of the primaries.

General elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even-numbered years.

Where to Vote. A polling place is in each election precinct. It is the responsibility of the county commissioners court to divide the county into a convenient number of election precincts. To find where you vote, check your newspaper immediately preceding each election for the list of polling places.

When to Vote. State law provides that in all elections, general, primary, or special, the polls will be open from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. There are two exceptions: in counties with a population of less than 100,000, the polls may open one hour later, at 8:00 A.M.; and in counties with a population of more than one million, the polls may open one hour earlier, at 6:00 A.M.

All persons who are waiting either inside or outside a polling place at 7:00 P.M. must be given the opportunity to vote.

At the Polls. When a voter goes to the polls, he presents his voter registration certificate to one of the election officials, who checks it against the list of registered voters to make sure that he is a registered voter in that election

precinct. When the election official is satisfied that he is entitled to vote, a notation is made on the list to show that that particular person has voted. Before returning the registration certificate to the voter, the election clerk stamps or writes the words "Voted on day of , 19. . ." on the back of it. In precincts using paper ballots, the voter's name is entered on the poll list, and he is allowed to select his ballot and to go to a voting booth or to a place prepared for voting, and there cast his ballot. In precincts using voting machines, after his name is entered on the poll list, the voter is permitted to enter the voting booth to cast his ballot.

In marking a paper ballot, the voter places an X in the square beside the name of the person for whom he wishes to vote. If he does not wish to vote for any of the candidates for a particular office in the general election, he may write in the name of any person he may choose in the space provided. If in the general election, he wishes to vote a straight ticket (that is, vote for all the candidates of any one political party), he places an X in the square at the head of the column of the party for whom he wishes to vote.

In an election where questions or propositions are to be voted on, he places an X in the square beside the statement indicating the way he wishes to vote on each proposition, that is, for or against.

In the top right-hand corner of each ballot is a stub bearing a number identical to the number of the ballot. After marking his ballot, the voter writes his name on the back of the stub, tears it off, and places it in a locked box provided for that purpose. He then folds his ballot so that the signature of the election judge on the back of the ballot is showing and places it in another locked box.

In precincts using an electronic voting system, the procedure is the same as that in precincts using paper ballots, except that the voter marks his ballot by using the voting equipment provided for that purpose.

In using a voting machine, the voter enters the booth and closes the curtain behind him. A small lever is opposite the name of each candidate on the ballot. A vote is cast by pulling the lever down until an X shows beside the name. If the voter wishes to cast a vote for some person whose name does not appear on the ballot, a roll of paper is pro-

vided to write in the name of that person. A straight ticket is voted by pulling down the lever at the top of a party's column of candidates. The votes cast are registered when the voter opens the curtain to leave the voting booth.

Each voter has the privilege of asking questions about any of the voting procedures he does not understand. Such questions should be willingly answered by the election officials.

Aid to Voters. If a voter is unable to mark his own ballot or to operate a voting machine because he is physically unable to write or is blind, two officers of the election may help him, but only after swearing that they will not suggest in any way how the voter should vote, and that they will cast his vote as the voter directs.

Instead of being assisted by two election officers, a voter may select any qualified voter living in the same precinct to help him.

Although an election judge or clerk may use only the English language in performing his duties as an election officer, he may use another language when giving instructions or aid to a voter who does not understand the English language. If the election officer cannot speak or understand the language used by the voter, the voter may communicate through an interpreter of his choice, as long as the interpreter is a qualified voter in that precinct.

The Electoral College. Many voters do not realize that they do not directly elect the President and the Vice President of the United States, as they do other candidates for public office. Rather, they elect the President and the Vice President through a system known as the Electoral College.

When a voter goes to the polls in November, he is voting not for a party's candidates for President and Vice President, but for that party's slate of electors, who elect the President and Vice President. There is no federal law requiring the names of the electors to appear on the ballot, so in many states, including Texas, only the names of the candidates appear on the ballot.

The number of electors in each state is equal to the number of that state's senators and representatives in Congress. Thus, in 1968, Texas had twenty-five electoral votes — one

for each of its two senators and twenty-three representatives. There is no uniform method by which the electors are selected. In Texas, the electors are selected by the delegates to a party's state presidential convention.

The November general election *indirectly* determines who will be the next President and Vice President of the United States, but they are not actually elected until the electoral votes are cast and formally counted.

The slate of electors that received a *plurality* of the votes cast in the November general election receives all of a state's electoral votes. This is known as the "winner-take-all" system, since votes cast for defeated presidential electors do not count.

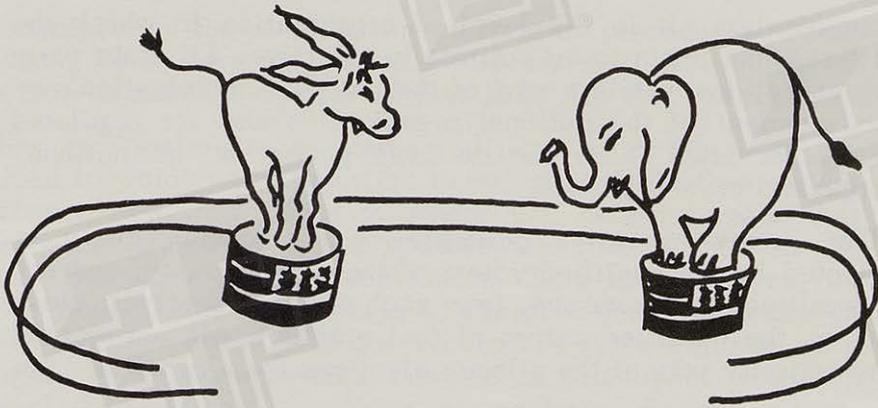
The winning slate of electors meets in the state capital on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December to cast its votes for President and Vice President.

On January 6, the Vice President, as presiding officer of the United States Senate, in the presence of the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, formally counts the electoral votes, which have been sent by registered mail from each state capital, and announces the count. The candidates receiving a *majority* of the electoral votes are then declared legally elected.

If no candidate for President receives a majority of the electoral votes, the election is then decided by the House of Representatives. Each state delegation has one vote, and chooses from among the top three candidates; a majority of twenty-six votes is needed to elect. If no candidate for Vice President has a majority, the Senate chooses from the top two candidates, with each senator having one vote. Again, it takes a majority, or fifty-one votes, to elect.

POLITICAL CALENDAR

ACTIVITY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE
First Primary Election	First Saturday in May in even-numbered years	All qualified voters who wish to become party members	To elect party nominees for county, district, state, and national offices
Precinct Convention	First Saturday in May in even-numbered years.	All party members	To select delegates to county or senatorial district convention and to adopt resolutions
County or Senatorial District Convention	First Saturday after first primary election	Delegates from precincts	To select delegates to state conventions and to adopt resolutions
Second Primary Election	First Saturday in June in even-numbered years.	Party members; qualified voters not members of another party	Run-off election to elect party nominees for county, district, state, and national offices
State Presidential Convention	Second Tuesday after second primary, every four years in years divisible by four	State convention delegates	To elect delegates to national convention, to name national committee members, and to select presidential electors
State Convention	Third Tuesday in September in even-numbered years	State convention delegates	To elect state executive committee, to announce nominations for state offices, and to write party platform
General Election	First Tuesday after first Monday in November in even-numbered years	All qualified voters	To elect county, district, state, and national officers
Electoral College	First Monday after the second Wednesday in December every four years in years divisible by four	Presidential electors	To cast electoral votes for President and Vice President
For parties not holding primary elections:		Second Saturday in May for county conventions Third Saturday in May for senatorial district conventions Second Saturday in June for state presidential convention and state convention	
Municipal Elections: Home-Rule Cities	As determined by city charter	All qualified voters	To elect city officials
General-Law Cities	First Saturday in April	All qualified voters	To elect city officials
School Trustee Elections	Usually first Saturday in April	All qualified voters	To elect school trustees
Special District Elections	As determined in statutes establishing such special district	All qualified voters	To elect special district officials



POLITICAL PARTIES

A political party is an organization of persons who have combined to control or influence both the policies and the personnel of government. Government in the United States means government by the people, acting to a large extent through political parties. Many of the major decisions that affect the quality of government are made within the party structure. Therefore, it is vital that a large number of citizens take part in the workings of the parties.

In the United States we have two major political parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Neither one has a particular cause or ideology; each is made up of persons holding a broad range of political philosophies. What happens is that the two parties compete with each other in offering the voter a plan for better government services and programs in the hope of winning the support of enough voters to become the party in power.

Functions of a Political Party. The functions of a political party are: to draw up a platform, or a plan for government services and programs; to nominate candidates for office; to plan campaigns and raise funds to elect these nominees to office in order to carry out party plans; and, if out of power, to act as the opposition party.

When a party is in power, it confronts the problems of the day with the best answers it can. When a party is out of power, it becomes the opposition party and does its best to find flaws and failures in the policies of government.

Party Organization. The basic unit of a party is the county executive committee. It is the grass roots of the state party

organization. It is the level of organization in which the citizen can begin to be politically effective. All state party organizations, while a part of the national organization, are independent of the national organization and are regulated by state law. There are no laws governing the national organization of a party.

The county executive committee has a county chairman, elected by the qualified voters of the entire county; and one committeeman, or woman, from each election precinct, elected by the qualified voters of that precinct. All are elected by majority vote at the primary elections for a two-year term.

The county executive committee is responsible for the conduct of the primary elections, including receiving applications for precinct, county, and district offices; designating a polling place for each election precinct (each party has its own polling place); procuring supplies; canvassing votes; and assessing and collecting funds from the party's candidates to pay the expenses of the primary elections.

The state executive committee has a chairman and a vice-chairman, one of which is a man and the other a woman; and sixty-two committee members, a man and a woman from each of Texas' thirty-one senatorial districts. They are nominated and elected by the delegates to the party's state convention and serve for a two-year term.

The state executive committee has general charge of the affairs of the party, including certifying to the county chairmen the names of all candidates for nomination to state offices; canvassing the returns for state and district offices; and raising campaign funds.

The national committee has a chairman; an executive secretary; a treasurer; and two committee members, a man and a woman, from each state and territory. The chairman is named by the presidential candidate. The other executive officers are selected by the national committee. The committee members from Texas are named by the delegates to the state presidential convention to serve for four years.

The national committee conducts the presidential campaign, raises funds for the party, selects the national convention city, and generally supervises the affairs of the party.

How to Join a Party. Any person who is a qualified voter, and who votes in a party's primary elections, becomes a member of that political party in Texas, and is eligible to

participate in the election and convention procedures of that party. Upon becoming a qualified member of a party, a person remains a member of that party for that voting year.

How to Participate in Party Politics. After you have decided to which party you wish to belong, vote in that party's primary elections. This is where you help nominate that party's candidates for county, state, and national offices. Attend the party precinct convention. This is where you, as a member of the party, begin to exercise some influence on those party people who are elected to represent you at a higher level. As a precinct convention participant, you help elect delegates to the county or senatorial district convention, and adopt resolutions affecting party policies; this is where you let those representing you know where you stand; this is the step you take to have a voice in nominating the party's candidate for president.

Work as a volunteer in the party's activities. There are many jobs to be done, from stuffing envelopes to raising funds to being a delegate or even a candidate. Or you may choose to work for a specific candidate. What you can do depends on many things: your talents and abilities, the time you can afford to spend, your aims as a citizen.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Executive Branch

The United States Constitution provides that: "The Executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." The specific powers of the President are briefly described in the Constitution, but as the nation has grown in size and strength, so have the nature and scope of the presidency changed.



The President. The President is the chief executive officer of the United States. To become president, a person must be at least thirty-five years of age, a natural born citizen of the United States, and a resident of the United States for at least fourteen years. The President is elected for a four-year term, and may be reelected for a second four-year term.

THE CABINET

DEPARTMENT	HEADED BY	RESPONSIBILITIES
State	Secretary of State	Principal foreign policy adviser to the President. Directs, coordinates, and supervises U. S. foreign relations.
Treasury	Secretary of the Treasury	Formulates domestic and international financial policy; accounts for public moneys; controls manufacture of coins, currency, and postage stamps. Directs Internal Revenue Service and Secret Service.
Defense	Secretary of Defense	Maintains and directs Departments of the Army, Navy, & Air Force to defend the U.S. against all enemies and to safeguard the internal security of the U.S.
Justice	Attorney General	Acts as chief law officer for the federal government. As law enforcement agent, directs FBI, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.
Post Office	Postmaster General	Directs postal services throughout the U.S.
Interior	Secretary of the Interior	Custodian of U.S. natural resources, responsible for their management, conservation, and development. Directs such agencies as National Park Service, Bureau of Mines, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.
Agriculture	Secretary of Agriculture	Performs functions relating to research, education, conservation, marketing, surplus disposal, and rural development.
Commerce	Secretary of Commerce	Promotes development of economic resources of the U.S. and international economic position of the U.S. Administers Bureau of the Census, Maritime Administration, and Patent Office.
Labor	Secretary of Labor	Administers and enforces laws relating to wage earners, their working conditions, and employment opportunities. Maintains U.S. Training and Employment Service.
Health, Education, and Welfare	Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare	Administers those agencies responsible for the health, education, and welfare of the public, including the Social Security Administration.
Housing and Urban Development	Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Fosters the orderly growth and development of urban areas, and coordinates governmental and private efforts affecting housing and urban development.
Transportation	Secretary of Transportation	Develops national transportation policies and programs to provide fast, safe, efficient, and convenient transportation.

He receives an annual salary of \$200,000. He also receives annual allowances of \$50,000 to cover expenses resulting from his official duties and \$40,000 for travel and official entertaining.

As chief executive, he is responsible for the administration of the government and the enforcement of the laws. Some of his more specific powers and responsibilities include: reporting to Congress on the state of the nation; recommending legislation to Congress; serving as commander-in-chief of the armed forces; appointing, with the consent of the Senate, diplomatic officials, Supreme Court justices, and other officers of the national government; preparing the annual budget; and acting as the national leader of his political party. The President is aided in carrying out these responsibilities by the Cabinet, the Executive Office of the President, and numerous independent agencies.

The Cabinet. The heads of the twelve executive departments make up the Cabinet, which functions at the pleasure of the President. Its purpose is to advise the President on any matter on which he wishes such advice. As heads of the twelve executive departments, cabinet members are responsible for the functioning of the many bureaus and divisions which comprise each department. Cabinet members receive an annual salary of \$60,000.

Executive Office of the President. To assist him in the general management of the many agencies and regulatory commissions of the federal government, the President has a group of staff units organized into the Executive Office of the President. These units serve at the pleasure of the President, and include such agencies as the Bureau of the Budget, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Council for Urban Affairs.

Independent Agencies. In addition to the Cabinet and the Executive Office of the President, there are over fifty independent agencies, established and funded by acts of Congress, whose functions are either administrative, regulatory, or corporate. Some of the better known of these agencies are the Veterans Administration, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Reserve System, and the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The Vice President. The Vice President may be considered

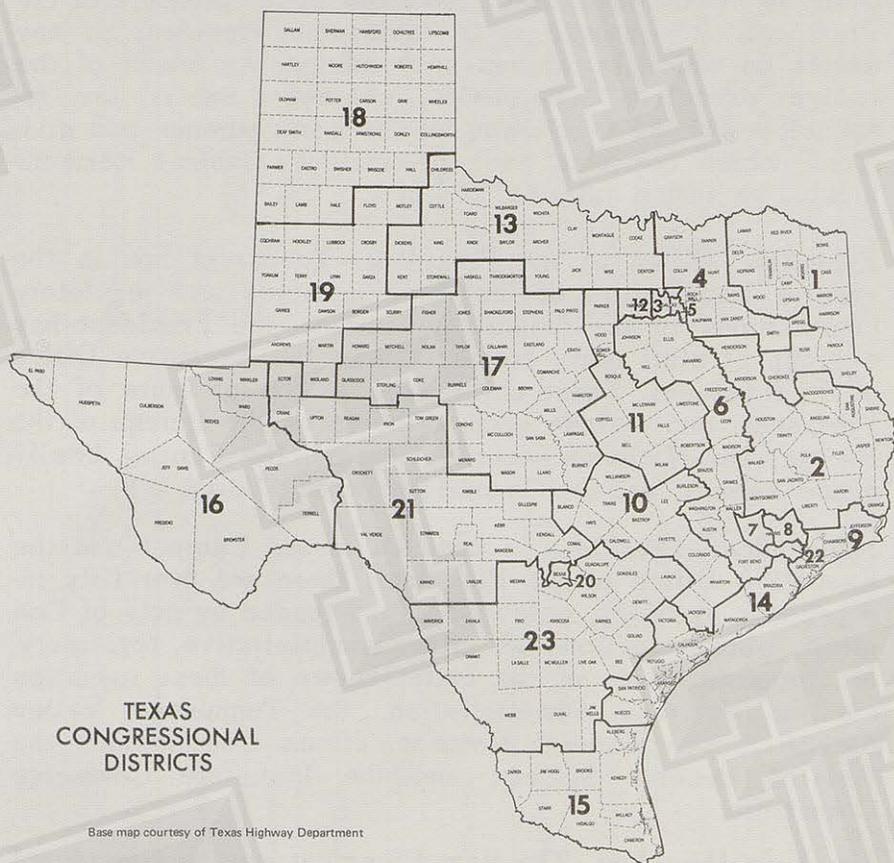
a part of the executive branch in that he is elected by the same system as the President; and in that he may succeed to the presidency, in which event he assumes the powers and duties of that office.

He must have the same qualifications as the President, and is elected for a four-year term. He receives an annual salary of \$62,500 and an additional allowance of \$10,000 to cover expenses incurred in carrying out his official duties.

The major function of the Vice President is to serve as presiding officer of the Senate. In addition, he participates in all Cabinet meetings, and has such executive duties as are assigned to him by the President.

The Legislative Branch

The Congress of the United States is made up of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Constitution provides that two senators be elected from each state,



for a total of 100 senators; and that the number of representatives for each state be based on the population of each state, with every state entitled to at least one representative. A law in effect since 1929 limits the size of the House to 435 members.

Representatives from those states entitled to more than one are elected from congressional districts, each with approximately the same population. After each national census, taken every ten years, the Bureau of the Census determines how many representatives each state may have. As long as the number of members in the House of Representatives remains fixed, a population increase calls for a redistribution of seats. It is the responsibility of each state legislature to adjust the congressional districts in its state.

Each Congress covers a two-year period, is identified by number, and holds two sessions. Each year of the Congress is a session; i.e., 1969 was the first session of the 91st Congress; 1970 is the second session. The President may call Congress into special session if it has been adjourned for the year.

The presiding officer of the Senate is the Vice President. A president pro tempore is elected by the members of the Senate to preside in the absence of the Vice President. The presiding officer of the House of Representatives is the Speaker of the House, who is elected by the members of the House and who is also the leader of the majority party in the House. He draws the same annual salary and allowances as does the Vice President. He is second in line of succession to the presidency.

The Constitution defines the powers of Congress. Included are the powers to assess and collect taxes; to regulate commerce, both interstate and foreign; to coin money; to establish post offices and post roads; to establish courts inferior to the Supreme Court; to declare war; to raise and maintain a military force; and to enact all necessary laws. The Senate is granted the special powers to approve or disapprove Presidential appointments by majority vote; and to concur with treaties by a two-thirds vote. The House of Representatives has the special power to originate all revenue-raising bills.

United States Senator. A United States senator must be at least thirty years of age, must be a resident of the state from which he is elected, and must have been a citizen of

the United States for nine years. He is elected for a six-year term. Terms in the Senate are staggered, with one-third of the senators being elected every two years. A senator receives an annual salary of \$42,500. He also receives an allowance for office staff and for travel to and from his home state during sessions, and the use of the franking privilege (free postage) for official business.

United States Representative. A United States representative must be at least twenty-five years of age, must be a resident of the state from which he is elected, and must have been a citizen of the United States for seven years. He is elected for a two-year term and receives the same annual salary and allowances and privileges as a senator.

The majority and minority leaders of the Senate, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the minority leader of the House receive an annual salary of \$49,500. The majority leader of the House is the Speaker, who receives an annual salary of \$62,500.

The Judicial Branch

The judicial power of the United States is vested in the Supreme Court, and in such other courts as are established by Congress. The federal judiciary is responsible for the trial of cases involving federal laws. All federal judges are appointed by the President, with the consent of the Senate, to "hold their Offices during good Behavior."

The Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. It has appellate jurisdiction *only*, except in "all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, and those in which a State shall be a party," in which cases it has original jurisdiction. The Supreme Court is composed of a Chief Justice, who receives an annual salary of \$62,500; and eight Associate Justices, who receive an annual salary of \$60,000.

Courts of Appeals. There are eleven Courts of Appeals, which serve groups of states divided into eleven judicial circuits. These courts have jurisdiction over cases appealed from the district courts. They also have the power to review and enforce orders of federal administrative agencies. Each judicial circuit has from three to fifteen judges. Each judge receives an annual salary of \$42,500.

District Courts. District courts are trial courts and hear

cases under general federal jurisdiction. Each state has at least one district court, with some states having as many as four. There is at least one judge for each district, with some districts having many more, depending upon the number of cases to be heard. Each judge receives an annual salary of \$40,000.

Texas has four district courts, located in Tyler, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas, with eighteen judges. All appeals from the district courts are made to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, located in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Special Courts. From time to time Congress has created special courts to deal with particular types of cases. Included are: **United States Court of Claims** to render judgment upon any claims against the United States founded upon the Constitution or an act of Congress; **United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals** to review certain patent and trademark cases; **United States Customs Court** to render judgment on civil actions arising under the tariff laws; **Territorial Courts**, comparable to United States district courts, established in the Territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Canal Zone; and **United States Court of Military Appeals**, the final appellate tribunal in court-martial convictions.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Executive Branch

The executive branch of the state consists of seven elected officers: governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, comptroller of public accounts, treasurer, commissioner of the general land office, and commissioner of agriculture; three appointed officers: secretary of state, adjutant general, and commissioner of labor statistics; two elected administrative boards: State Board of Education, and Railroad Commission of Texas; and numerous appointed boards and commissions.



The responsibilities of the executive branch are to administer state government and to carry out governmental policies as determined by the legislative branch.

The Governor. The governor is the chief executive of the state. He must be at least thirty years of age, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the state for five years immediately preceding his election. He is elected for a two-year term, and there is no limit on the number of terms he may serve. He receives an annual salary of \$55,000, and is furnished a governor's mansion by the state.

The governor has a wide range of powers and responsibilities. He appoints the secretary of state, the adjutant general, the commissioner of labor statistics, and the members of many boards and commissions. All appointments must be confirmed by two-thirds of the senators present in the Senate. He is commander-in-chief of the state militia, which includes the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. He is required to submit a budget to the legislature. He is charged with the responsibility of seeing that the laws of the state are enforced.

From time to time he delivers messages to the legislature on the condition of the state, in which he recommends necessary legislation, accounts for all the money spent under his supervision, and makes estimates of the money needed from taxation. He may call the legislature into special session. He may veto any bill passed by the legislature.

Upon the recommendation of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, he may grant reprieves, commutations of sentences, and pardons.

The governor acts as the official channel of communication between the state and the federal government and the other states. He is the official and ceremonial head of the state. He is usually considered to be the leader of his political party.

The Lieutenant Governor. The lieutenant governor serves as president of the Senate, and as governor of the state if the governor temporarily leaves the state, dies, or resigns. He must have the same qualifications for office as the governor. He is elected for a two-year term, and there is no limit on the number of terms he may serve. While serving as president of the Senate, he receives the same salary, per diem, and mileage allowance as a member of the Senate does. While acting as governor of the state, he receives the same salary as the governor. In addition, the state furnishes him an apartment in the capitol building.

The powers of the lieutenant governor while serving as president of the Senate include the exercise of the usual powers of a presiding officer; the appointment of all regular and special committees in the Senate; the referral of all bills to committee; the appointment of Senate employees; and the right to vote only in case of a tie.

The Attorney General. The attorney general is the lawyer for the state. He is elected for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$27,500.

He represents the state in all cases before the Supreme Court of Texas and the courts of civil appeal in which the state is a party. He is the legal adviser to the governor, heads of departments, state institutions, and county authorities. His department often assists legislators in preparing bills.

The Comptroller of Public Accounts. The comptroller of public accounts is the state's bookkeeper, as well as its main tax collector. He is elected for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$26,000.

As chief bookkeeper, the comptroller keeps a record of all the income and expenditures of the state. As chief tax collector, he collects gasoline, natural gas, petroleum, franchise, inheritance, and general sales taxes, and supervises the collection of other taxes and payments due the state.

To assist the legislature in its financial planning, he provides a financial statement at the close of the fiscal year, and an estimate of income for the next two years. When an appropriations bill is passed, and before it can become effective, he must certify that it is within the amount of available funds.

The Treasurer. The treasurer is the custodian of all state funds and securities. He is elected for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$26,000.

As custodian of state funds and securities, the treasurer receives all the money paid to the state, and pays all the bills of the state when authorized to do so by the comptroller.

The Commissioner of the General Land Office. The commissioner of the general land office is the administrator of the Land Office. He is elected for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$26,000.

Texas is unusual in that it is one of two states (Alaska is the other) which has a specific office for managing, controlling, and disposing of public land. In addition to the public domain land which still belongs to the state, public land includes river beds, tidelands, and bays and inlets, income from which is reserved for the benefit of the public schools. Originally created to handle records pertaining to land titles, the Land Office has as its main function today the collection of money from bonuses, rentals, leases, and royalties on mineral rights.

The Commissioner of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture is administered by the commissioner of agriculture. He is elected for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$26,000. This is the one elective state executive officer provided for by statutory law, rather than by the constitution.

He is responsible for enforcing state laws for the control of plant pests; the regulations concerning the inspection, grading, packing, shipping, marketing, and canning of citrus fruits, and the packing and shipping of certain vegetables; the sizing, quality, grading, and labeling of chicken eggs; the certification of plant and seed growers; the standardization of weights and measures. He also inspects warehouses; and licenses florists, greenhouse operators, and egg dealers.

The Secretary of State. The secretary of state, the only appointive executive officer provided for in the constitution, is appointed by the governor, with the consent of the Senate, for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$24,000.

He acts as chief election officer of the state, certifying candidates for state and district offices, and certifying the returns for state and district elections. He is the keeper of the great seal of the state, serves as custodian of official state records, and issues charters and permits to corporations.

The Adjutant General. The adjutant general controls the military activities of the state, subject to the orders of the governor, and is the commander of the Texas National Guard. He is appointed by the governor, with the consent of the Senate, for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$15,000.

The Commissioner of Labor Statistics. The commissioner of labor statistics is the administrator of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. He is appointed by the governor, with the consent of the Senate, for a two-year term and receives an annual salary of \$10,500. The main responsibility of the bureau is to enforce certain Texas labor laws. It also collects industrial and labor statistics.

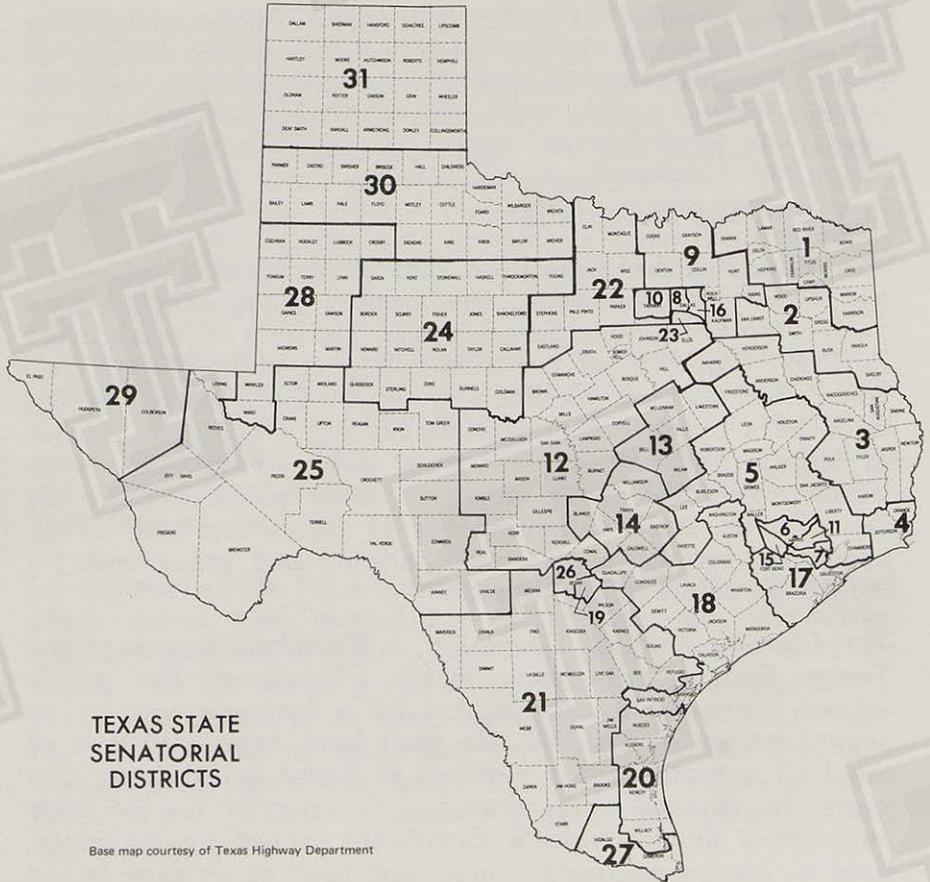
The State Board of Education. The State Board of Education has twenty-one members, one member being elected from each of the twenty-one congressional districts as established in 1949. One-third of the membership is elected every two years, for six-year overlapping terms. Each board member must be a citizen of the United States, a qualified elector of his district, and at least thirty years of age. He serves without pay. The Board appoints, with the consent of the Senate, the State Commissioner of Education; and is responsible for the adoption of policies and procedures for the Texas public school system.

The Commissioner of Education is the administrator of the Texas Education Agency, which administers the public school system. He is appointed for a four-year term at an annual salary of \$18,500. He must have been a citizen of the United States and a resident of Texas for at least five years; be of good moral character; be eligible for the highest school administrator's certificate issued by the state; have at least a master's degree; and have experience in the direction and coordination of school systems.

The Railroad Commission of Texas. The Railroad Commission of Texas has three members, one elected at each general election for a six-year overlapping term. Each member receives an annual salary of \$22,500. The duties of the commission include the enforcement of oil and gas conservation regulations; the regulation of pipe lines as common carriers; the regulation of railroad, truck, and bus transportation for both passengers and freight.

The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of the state, the Texas Legislature, is made up of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The state constitution limits the membership of the Senate to 31, and of the House to 150, elected from senatorial and representative districts, respectively.



**TEXAS STATE
SENATORIAL
DISTRICTS**

Base map courtesy of Texas Highway Department

Both types of districts must be based on population and conform to the principle of equality of representation. One senator is elected from each senatorial district, with each district having approximately the same population. Representative districts are not necessarily of equal size, since some are single-member districts, while others are multi-member districts. Representative districts, nevertheless, must be apportioned so as to provide, as nearly as practicable, an equal ratio of population to representatives. The state constitution provides that the legislature be reapportioned every ten years, following the United States census.

A legislature covers a two-year period, and each legislature is numbered. Thus, the legislature serving for the years 1969-1970 is the 61st Legislature. The legislature holds regular sessions every two years, meeting in Austin on the second Tuesday in January in odd-numbered years, and is

State Senator. A state senator must be a citizen of the United States, a qualified voter of the state, a resident of the state for five years, a resident of the senatorial district from which he is elected for one year, and at least twenty-six years of age. He is elected for a four-year term; terms are staggered, with sixteen senators being elected at one general election and fifteen at the following general election. A state senator receives an annual salary of \$4,800, and a per diem of \$12.00 per day for the first 120 days of each regular session and for thirty days of each special session of the legislature. He is entitled to a mileage allowance, not to exceed \$2.50 for every twenty-five miles traveled, for one round trip from his home to the capital during each session. In addition, the state pays secretarial and office expenses for each senator during both the legislative sessions and the interim between sessions. In the current interim, senators may charge to the state for such expenses an amount not to exceed \$1,700 per month.

State Representative. A state representative must be a citizen of the United States, a qualified voter of the state, a resident of the state for two years, a resident of the representative district from which he is elected for one year, and at least twenty-one years of age. He is elected for a two-year term, and receives the same salary, per diem, and mileage allowance as a state senator. Representatives also may charge to the state secretarial and office expenses in an amount not to exceed \$875 per month for the current interim.

The Judicial Branch

The judicial branch of the state is made up of two supreme courts, one for civil cases (the Texas Supreme Court) and one for criminal cases (the Court of Criminal Appeals); courts of civil appeals; district courts; county courts; corporation courts; and justice of the peace courts. The legislature may create such additional courts as it may think necessary.

The prime responsibilities of the judicial branch are to administer the laws of the state, to protect the rights of citizens, and to punish criminals.

The Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest civil court in the state. It has final jurisdiction over questions of law concerning civil matters and the constitutionality of a legislative act.

The Supreme Court is made up of a chief justice and eight associate justices. They are elected for six-year overlapping terms, three being elected every two years. A supreme court justice must be at least thirty-five years of age, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the state; he must have been a practicing lawyer or a judge of a court of record for at least ten years. He receives an annual salary of \$27,000.

Court of Criminal Appeals. The Court of Criminal Appeals is the highest criminal court in the state. It has final jurisdiction in all criminal cases.

The Court of Criminal Appeals is made up of five justices, one of whom is the presiding judge. They are elected for six-year overlapping terms, must have the same qualifications as a supreme court justice, and receive an annual salary of \$27,000.

Courts of Civil Appeals. The fourteen courts of civil appeals rank below the Supreme Court and above the district courts. They have jurisdiction only over those civil cases appealed from the district courts.

Each court of civil appeals is presided over by three judges. They are elected by district for six-year overlapping terms, one being elected every two years. They must have the same qualifications as a justice of the Supreme Court, and receive an annual salary of \$24,000.

District Courts. The district court is the chief trial court of the state. It has original jurisdiction over such matters as felonies, divorces, suits for damages and slander, controversies over land titles, and contested elections. Its original jurisdiction is concurrent with that of the county court when the amount in controversy exceeds \$500 but not \$1,000. Above \$1,000 it has exclusive jurisdiction. The district court has appellate jurisdiction over probate matters originally handled in county courts. Trial by jury may be had in all cases in a district court.

The state is divided into a number of district regions, with one or more courts in each region. A single district court may handle both civil and criminal cases. Highly populated counties may have several civil district courts and several criminal district courts, as well as domestic relations and juvenile courts.

Each district court is presided over by a district judge. He

must be at least twenty-five years of age, must be a resident of Texas and a resident of the district for two years immediately preceding his election, and must have had at least four years' experience in the state as a lawyer or judge. He is elected for a four-year term, and receives a base annual salary of \$20,000 paid from state funds. Many counties supplement this base salary.

County Courts. Each county has a county court presided over by a county judge. This court has original jurisdiction in cases of misdemeanors where the fine imposed exceeds \$200, and in civil cases where the amount involved is not less than \$200 or more than \$1,000. It also probates wills, appoints guardians, and may commit the mentally ill to mental hospitals.

In counties with large populations, the legislature may set up one or more special county courts. In this event, the regular county judge, who is the presiding officer of the county commissioners court, is relieved of all or part of his duties as judge of a county court.

A county judge is a person "well informed in the law of the state." He is elected for a four-year term and receives such fees and/or salary as may be determined by the county commissioners court.

Corporation Courts. Provision is made for the establishment of a corporation court in each incorporated municipality in the state. Cities with a population of over 380,000 may have more than one corporation court, but not more than one for each 80,000 population. This court has jurisdiction within the limits of the city over all criminal cases arising from violation of municipal ordinances.

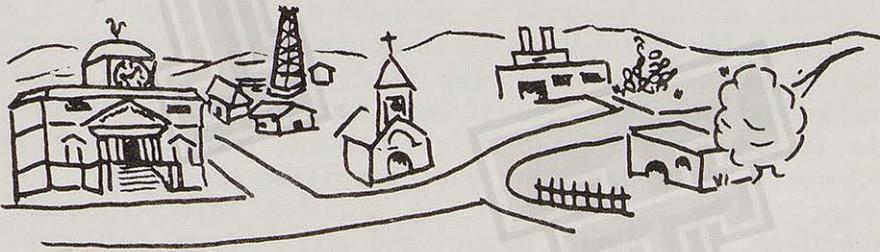
In general-law cities, the mayor is ex officio judge of the corporation court unless the city council provides otherwise. In home-rule cities, selection of the judge is provided for in the charter.

Justice of the Peace Courts. The lowest of Texas courts is the justice of the peace court. This court has jurisdiction over criminal cases where punishment is by fine alone and the fine does not exceed \$200, and over civil cases where the amount of money involved does not exceed \$200.

Each justice of the peace is also the judge of a small claims court, which has concurrent jurisdiction with the

justice of the peace court. For a small fee a creditor can seek judgment on claims not to exceed \$150, or on wages or salary not to exceed \$200.

The county commissioners court divides each county into not less than four or more than eight justice of the peace precincts, with a justice of the peace court in each precinct. Justices of the peace may be paid a salary, or serve on a fee basis, as determined by the county commissioners court.



COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The county is created by the state and may exercise only those powers given it by the Texas Constitution and by state law. Each of the 254 counties in the state serves not only as a unit of local government, but also as an administrative district of the state.

Salaries of county officials vary from county to county. In some counties, all or part of the salaries are set by the passage of a local law by the legislature. In others, the county commissioners court sets the salaries. More information on salaries may be obtained from the county auditor.

All elective county and precinct officers serve for a four-year term.

County Commissioners Court. The county commissioners court is the policy-making body and administrative head of the county. It is made up of the county judge and four county commissioners.

The county judge presides over the meetings of the court, and is elected by the voters of the whole county. Each commissioner is elected by the voters in one of the four commissioners precincts of the county. The county judge and the commissioners from precincts 2 and 4 are elected at one general election, the commissioners from precincts 1 and 3 at the general election two years later.

The main responsibilities of the commissioners court are to maintain law and order; to administer county finances, including the levying and collection of county taxes, and the adoption of a county budget; to keep various records, including deeds, mortgages, contracts, and marriage licenses; to build and maintain county roads and bridges; to administer such services as libraries, county hospitals, welfare programs, parks, and playgrounds. As an administrative district of the state, the county conducts elections, and assesses property and collects taxes for the state.

County Judge. In addition to being the presiding officer of the commissioners court, the county judge prepares the budget in those counties of less than 225,000 population. He is responsible for calling elections, posting election notices, and for receiving and canvassing the returns. As judge of the county court, he probates wills, appoints guardians, is a notary public, and may perform marriages.

County Clerk. The county clerk may serve as clerk to both the commissioners court and the county court(s). He keeps the records of the meetings of those courts. He is recorder and custodian of legal documents such as deeds, mortgages, and contracts; and he issues marriage licenses. He conducts absentee voting for primary, special, and general elections, and is responsible for transmitting election returns to the secretary of state.

District Clerk. In counties of 8,000 or more population there is an elected clerk of the district court. His duties are to record the proceedings of the district court(s), administer oaths, and take depositions. In counties of less than 8,000 population, the county clerk carries out these duties.

Assessor and Collector of Taxes. The main duties of the assessor and collector of taxes are to assess and collect property taxes for both the state and the county; to issue certificates of title and license plates for motor vehicles; to issue voter registration certificates; and to compile poll lists.

Sheriff. The sheriff is the main peace officer of the county, and as such is responsible for the investigation of crimes and the arrest of criminals; he serves writs, subpoenas, and processes for the county and district courts; he has the authority to appoint deputies; and he is in charge of the county jail and the prisoners.

County Treasurer. The county treasurer receives and pays out all county funds as directed by the commissioners court, and makes quarterly reports to the commissioners court on the condition of the treasury.

County Auditor. State law requires that all counties with a population of at least 35,000 or tax values of at least \$15 million have an auditor. Other counties may have one if ordered by the commissioners court. The major duty of the auditor is to oversee the financial records of the county. He also supervises the purchase of supplies for the county. In counties having a population of over 225,000, the auditor, rather than the county judge, prepares the budget. He is appointed by the district judge, or judges, to serve for two years.

County Attorney and/or District Attorney. Each county may have a county attorney, a criminal district attorney, or both. In small counties the same person may fill both positions. The main duties of a county attorney are to serve as legal adviser to county officers, to represent the state in criminal cases in county and justice of the peace courts, and to represent the county in civil cases. The main duties of a district attorney are to represent the state in all criminal cases in district and lower courts, and to act as chief criminal prosecutor for the county.

Justice of the Peace. A justice of the peace is elected from each justice of the peace precinct. His main duty is to preside over the justice of the peace court. He also serves as coroner except in those counties having a medical examiner. He may issue search warrants, conduct investigations and preliminary hearings, and perform marriages. No legal training is required to hold this office.

Constable. A constable serves processes, attends sessions of the justice of the peace court, and, in general, performs the duties of a peace officer. A constable for each justice of the peace precinct is elected by the qualified voters of that precinct.

County Superintendent of Schools. The legislature has provided for a county superintendent of schools in counties having a scholastic population of at least 3,000. He is elected, except in those counties having over 350,000 population where he is appointed by the county school trustees. In either case, his term of office is four years. His main

duty is to supervise all common-school districts within the county. The decline in the number of common-school districts has led to the legislature's abolishing this office in several counties, and allowing all counties to do so if approved by the voters of the county.

County School Trustees. The legislature has also provided for a five-member board of county school trustees to serve for two years. One member is elected from each of the four county commissioners precincts and the chairman from the county at large. The board has general management and control of the public schools in the county, including classifying schools, setting school district boundaries, providing for a school transportation system, and apportioning available school funds. In counties of over 350,000 population there are seven members—one from each of the county commissioners precincts and three from the county at large. They are elected for six-year overlapping terms. In a few counties, the office of county school trustee has been abolished by legislative act.

County Surveyor. The constitution provides for the election of a county surveyor in each county to make surveys of public lands. With the decrease in the amount of public lands available, this office is now vacant in many counties.

County Health Officer. Legislative law requires that the commissioners court appoint a county health officer to serve for two years. He must be a medical doctor and is charged with giving medical care to prisoners in the county jail. In addition, he must carry out certain duties required of him by the State Board of Health concerning quarantine, inspection, disease prevention, and general sanitation.

Miscellaneous. The constitution makes reference to both a Public Weigher and an Inspector of Hides and Animals. Both of these offices are practically nonexistent in today's county government. The function of the public weigher is to weigh grain, cotton, or other produce brought to him and to make a statement of the exact weights. The office of inspector of hides and animals, which was created as a means of preventing and controlling cattle thefts, is responsible for inspecting and keeping records on all hides and animals shipped out of a county.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Two classes of cities are provided for by the state constitution: (1) **general-law cities**, cities of 5,000 population or less, which must incorporate and operate under the general and local laws enacted by the legislature; and (2) **home-rule cities**, cities of over 5,000 population, which may frame and adopt their own charters by a vote of the citizens.

General-law cities must, and most home-rule cities do, adopt one of the following three forms of city government:

(1) **Mayor-Council:** The most common form of mayor-council government is that in which the mayor is elected at large, and the councilmen are elected either at large, by districts, or by some combination of the two. The mayor is the administrative head of the city and may have the power to appoint or remove department heads, and to veto acts of the council. The council acts as a policy-making and legislative body. Other city officials may be elected or appointed.

(2) **Commission:** The commission form of government is characterized by a small body of commissioners elected at large by a majority vote. Usually the one receiving the most votes is selected as mayor by the rest of the commissioners. As a group, they act as a legislative body. Individually, each commissioner serves as the head of an administrative department. The commission is generally authorized to appoint other needed city officers.

(3) **Council-Manager:** This form of government puts municipal legislative and policy-making powers in the hands of an elected council, and administrative powers in the hands of a city manager who is appointed by and is responsible only to the council. The council usually selects one of its own members to be mayor. In a few cities, he is elected by the voters in a city-wide election. The mayor presides over council meetings and represents the city on formal occasions.



Under constitutional law, city officials may be elected to serve a two-, three-, or four-year term, with no limit on the number of terms served. Although they may be supported by a citizens' group, candidates for city offices usually do not run on a partisan ticket in Texas. Salaries paid to councilmen or commissioners are usually minimal.

A city government has many functions. It enacts ordinances. It provides police, fire, sanitation, and health protection. It arranges for the provision of public utilities—water, gas, electricity, and public transportation. It builds and maintains streets. It builds and maintains parks and playgrounds, and may provide for recreation programs. It plans how city land may be used to the best advantage. It may plan and build housing projects. It provides welfare services. It may participate in the operation of hospitals, libraries, and airports. It has municipal or corporation courts to handle violations of traffic laws and city ordinances. Finally, it budgets for, and levies and collects taxes to pay for, all the above services.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENT

A special district, a form of government organized to provide services not provided by other levels of government, is an independent unit of local government. It is created under authority granted by both constitutional and statutory law.

There is no set pattern for the organization of special districts. Some districts have the power to tax, others do not; some are governed by elected officials, some by appointed officials; some are staffed by unpaid volunteers, others by highly paid professionals; some cover small local areas, others cover large areas that may include several counties, or even parts of several states.

The special district is the most rapidly growing form of local government, providing more and more services. Every person lives in some kind of special district, sometimes in several. The most common and best known special district is the independent school district. Other special districts may provide such services as water supply, flood control, housing, hospitals, junior colleges, soil conservation, irrigation, libraries, parks, or airports.

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

A council of governments (COG), or regional planning commission, is a recent development in metropolitan areas. Although authorized by state law, it is not a level of government. Rather, it is a voluntary association of local governments organized to provide a forum for the discussion of common problems and to seek solutions to those problems through inter-governmental cooperation.

The membership of a council of governments is made up of elected officials from the member governments. Member governments may include any organized government, such as city, county, or special district, within a specified area. Without any taxing authority, the council is dependent upon financial support from its member governments and grants received from the state and federal governments.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

A public official that you have helped elect to represent you in government depends a great deal upon hearing from you. Letting him know what you want has great influence upon what laws he will make, what kind of services he will provide for you. One of the best ways to communicate with him is through letters.

In writing, do make your letter legible, do be concise and brief, do use your own words and give reasons why you feel the way you do, do be courteous, do thank him when he does something you like, do sign your name and give your address, and do address him correctly.

Addressing Your Elected Officials

President of the United States: The President
 The White House
 Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

United States Senator: The Honorable (full name)
 Senate Office Building
 Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

United States Representative: The Honorable (full name)
House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515
Dear Mr. (last name):

Governor: The Honorable (full name)
State Capitol
Austin, Texas 78711
Dear Governor (last name):

State Senator: The Honorable (full name)
The Senate
Austin, Texas 78711
Dear Senator (last name):

State Representative: The Honorable (full name)
House of Representatives
Austin, Texas 78711
Dear Mr. (last name):

County Judge: The Honorable (full name)
County Courthouse
(city), Texas (zip code)
Dear Judge (last name):

County Commissioner: Mr. (full name)
County Commissioner
County Courthouse
(city), Texas (zip code)
Dear Mr. (last name):

Mayor: The Honorable (full name)
City Hall
(city), Texas (zip code)
Dear Mr. Mayor:

City Councilman: Councilman (full name)
City Hall
(city), Texas (zip code)
Dear Mr. (last name):

The closing for all letters, except to the President, is:
Sincerely yours. For letters addressed to the President, the
closing is: Very respectfully yours.

