

OHIO

Ohio ranks 7th among the states in number of local governments with 3,702 as of October 2007.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (88)

There are no areas in Ohio lacking county government. The county governing body is called the board of county commissioners. All but one county in Ohio operates in accordance with general statutes, although they may also organize, with voter approval, either under an alternate statutory form or under home rule charter. As of October 2007, Summit County is the only county to adopt one of the alternate forms (home rule charter). Its governing body is called the county council.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (2,246)

The 2,246 subcounty general purpose governments in Ohio comprise the 938 municipal (city and village) governments, and the 1,308 township governments.

Municipal Governments (938)

Municipal governments in Ohio are the cities (incorporated places having 5,000 inhabitants or more) and villages (incorporated places with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants). Cities and villages may exist within township areas; however, when the boundaries of a township are coterminous with the boundaries of a city or village, the township ceases to exist as a separate government. The minimum population requirement for incorporation is 1,600 for a village and 25,000 for a city.

Township Governments (1,308)

The entire area of the state is encompassed by township governments, except for townships that are coterminous with a city or village. Townships that are coterminous with a city or village are not counted as separate governments in census statistics on governments. Township governments are governed by boards of township trustees.

Townships with 3,500 to 5,000 residents in an unincorporated territory may adopt a limited home rule government upon petition of voters after a referendum. Townships with 5,000 or more population in their unincorporated area may adopt limited home rule government powers, either after voter approval or by resolution of the board of township trustees under certain conditions. Such townships with 15,000 or more population are called "urban townships."

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (668)

School District Governments (668)

The following types of school districts in Ohio are counted as separate governments for census purposes:

City school districts

Local school districts

Exempted village school districts (authorization for formation of any additional exempted village school districts, however, has been repealed)

Community college districts

Joint vocational school districts

An elected board of education governs each city school district, local school district, or exempted village school district. These districts may levy local school taxes and issue bonds with voter approval.

A school district previously under state supervision ("municipal school district") may be governed by a board whose members either are elected or appointed by the mayor of the municipality containing the greatest portion of the district's area.

Community college districts may be established by resolution of one or more counties having a total population of 75,000 or more, or by petition to the county board of elections. Approvals by the voters and by the state board of regents are required. A board of trustees, with three members appointed by the Governor with the

consent of the senate and six members appointed by the board of county commissioners, governs each district. Community college districts may establish fees and tuition, levy school taxes and issue revenue and general obligation bonds. Tax levies and general obligation bonds require voter approval.

Joint vocational school districts are established for joint support of vocational schools by two or more regular school districts, with approval by the state board of education. The joint vocational school district board consists of representatives from the boards of the participating school districts. Joint vocational school districts may issue bonds and levy ad valorem taxes with voter approval. They are counted as school district governments in census reporting. A joint vocational school district, if it is located within a single county, may as an alternative, be governed by the educational service center board.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Ohio has no dependent public school systems.

Other Educational Activities

Ohio law permits school districts to enter into agreements for joint or cooperative provision of facilities, programs, projects, activities, or services, subject to the approval of the state superintendent of public instruction. Pursuant to this law, Ohio Education Computer Network facilities and special education regional resource centers have been established.

Technical college districts are created by the state board of regents after local school boards or qualified voters submit a resolution or petition after a referendum in affected areas. Such districts are largely state supported. They are not counted as governments in census reporting, but are classified as state institutions. In addition, there are state community college districts, with trustees appointed by the Governor with consent of the senate, that are classified as state institutions and are not counted as separate governments.

Each county comprises an educational service

center for supervision of local schools. They are governed by an elected board. Joint educational service centers may be formed by up to five counties. Joint centers are governed by elected boards as well, and may include additional members appointed by the elected members. These centers are not counted as governments, but are classified as a dependent activity of the county government(s) they serve.

Authorizing legislation for "Joint high school districts" was repealed in 1993.

County school financing districts may be formed by an educational service center to finance special education, school improvements, and specified educational programs. These districts are governed by an educational service center board within its service area. Because county school finance districts participate in activities on behalf of the educational service centers, they are not counted as separate governments for census purposes.

Cooperative education school districts may be formed out of existing county school financing districts, for the purpose of operating a joint high school, by identical resolutions of a majority of the individual school districts in the service area. The district may be governed by the educational service center board serving ex-officio, or by a board composed of at least one member appointed by each participating school district, and one or more members appointed by the educational service center. These districts are classified as activities of the school districts they serve and are not counted as separate governments.

Prior to September 4, 1947, school districts were permitted to establish by resolution free public libraries. The law provides for the continuance of those in existence at that time. Such a library is classified for census purposes as a dependent agency of the establishing school district, and is not counted as a separate government. A board of trustees appointed by the school district board governs each such library. While the sponsoring school district may levy an ad valorem tax for library purposes, most libraries are financed from the proceeds of a portion of the state income tax (distributed on the basis of budgets submitted by

the library boards of trustees to the board of education of the school district) that is made available to libraries that offer free library service to all county residents.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (700)

Ohio statutes authorize the creation of a variety of special districts or authorities that are counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

Conservancy Districts

These districts provide for flood control, reclamation, irrigation, water conservation, water supply, and sewage disposal within a given area. They may be established by the court of common pleas of a single county, or by joint action of the courts of two or more counties, on petition of landowners or governing bodies of public corporations or watershed districts and after hearing. The district board of directors is appointed by the court of common pleas. Conservancy districts may issue bonds, levy special benefit assessments, and fix rates for the sale of water. Irrigation districts may also be formed under this chapter.

Joint Ambulance Districts

Joint ambulance districts may be established by resolution of the governing bodies of one or more townships and one or more municipalities, or by joint resolution of two or more townships or of two or more municipalities. A board of trustees appointed by the governing bodies of the participating governments governs each district. Joint ambulance districts may fix charges and rates, and, after referendum, may levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds. Some districts of this type are called emergency medical services districts. They are separate from joint emergency medical services districts established by county boards of commissioners, which are classified as county dependent agencies.

Joint Fire Districts

Joint fire districts may be established by resolution of the governing bodies of one or

more townships and one or more municipalities, or by joint resolution of two or more townships or of two or more municipalities. A board of trustees, selected from the governing boards of the participating governments, governs each district. The district may impose charges, levy ad valorem taxes, and issue bonds upon voter approval.

Joint Fire and Ambulance Districts

These districts are established by joint resolution of the governing bodies of a joint fire district and a joint ambulance district whose geographic service areas are identical. Districts may also be established by resolution of the governing bodies of one or more townships and one or more municipalities, or by joint resolution of two or more townships or two or more municipalities. A board of trustees, which is appointed as provided by the authorizing agreement, governs each district. The district may fix charges and, after referendum, may levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligations bonds. On creation of the joint fire and ambulance district, the participating districts cease to exist as separate governments.

Joint Solid Waste Management Districts--1953 Law

Districts to provide solid waste collection and disposal are created by resolution of one or more counties. A population minimum of 120,000 applies in some cases. A board of directors, consisting of the county commissioners of each participating county, or of members appointed by the county governing body in counties not having a board of county commissioners, governs each district. The districts may charge fees and issue revenue bonds. In addition, participating counties may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds on behalf of the districts. Districts under this law that serve only one county are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Joint Township Hospital Districts

These districts may be established by vote of the governing bodies of any two or more contiguous

municipalities or townships. A board consisting of all members of the boards of trustees of the participating townships, plus representatives from each participating municipality, governs each district. The districts may accept county and township appropriations, impose charges, and, with voter approval, levy taxes. Bond issues must be approved by the voters.

Library Districts

Three types of library districts in Ohio are counted as special district governments. These districts are to be distinguished from public libraries administered by county, municipal, township, or school district governments.

County library districts. These districts may be created by the county commissioners on approval by the voters, or by the boards of trustees of libraries serving school districts on approval of the taxing authorities of the subdivisions having jurisdiction over the libraries. A board of trustees, consisting of three members appointed by the judges of common pleas and four appointed by the county commissioners, governs each district.

Regional library districts. These districts are created by joint resolution of the commissioners of two or more contiguous counties. The library trustees are appointed jointly by the boards of county commissioners.

Both county and regional library districts may set ad valorem taxes. In practice, however, these library districts are financed from the proceeds of a portion of the state income tax (distributed on the basis of budgets submitted to the library boards of trustees) that is made available to libraries that offer free library service to all county residents.

Regional Library Systems. These districts are created by agreement among the boards of trustees of public libraries in two or more counties, or among four or more libraries within a metropolitan area as defined by the state library board, and

upon approval by the state library board. The library system trustees are selected from the members of the governing bodies of the participating libraries. These organizations provide and coordinate regional library services, may receive state, local, and Federal funding, and may also receive funding in connection with contracts.

Authorizing legislation for area library service organizations was repealed in 1999.

Metropolitan Housing Authorities

These authorities are established by the state director of development. The governing body of an authority consists of members appointed by the leadership of the governing bodies and courts of participating counties and highly populated municipalities. The number of appointees is dependent on the size and composition of the county. The authorities may issue bonds, fix rates and rents, and accept grants or contributions.

New Community Authorities

These districts are created by resolution of the board of county commissioners of each of the counties in the district or, under certain circumstances, by the governing body of a municipality within the district, after a hearing on a petition filed by a community developer and after concurrence of proximate cities. A board of trustees, initially appointed but thereafter elected, governs each district. New community districts may fix and collect service fees, rentals and community development charges; and may issue revenue bonds.

Park Districts

Ohio statutes authorize two types of park districts:

Park districts. These districts are created by the county probate judge on petition of the voters or of any county, municipal, or township governing body and after public hearing. A board of park commissioners appointed by the probate

judge governs each district. The district may issue bonds and may levy ad valorem taxes and benefit assessments.

Township park districts. These districts may be created by the court of common pleas on petition of the voters to the township trustees. They are governed by boards of park commissioners appointed by the court of common pleas or, if the entire park district is contained within the unincorporated area of the township, by the board of township trustees. The districts may impose charges, levy ad valorem taxes, and upon voter approval, issue bonds.

Joint Recreation Districts. These districts are created by townships, municipalities, counties, boards of township park commissioners, boards of education, and other political subdivisions. The districts are governed by a board of trustees appointed by the member governments. The districts may issue bonds which are paid for by sales and use tax levies.

Port Authorities

Port authorities may provide port or airport facilities within an area or promote economic development, housing, and other activities. They may be established by a municipal, county, or township government, or by a combination thereof. If established by more than one government, the number of directors appointed to represent each participating government is determined by agreement among the participating governments. Port authorities may collect rates and charges and issue revenue bonds. They may also levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds upon voter approval.

Port authorities serving only one county, municipal, or township government are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Regional Airport Authorities

Regional airport authorities are established by resolution of the board of county commissioners of a single county or from two or more contiguous counties. A board of trustees, selected in the manner specified by the resolution creating the authority, governs each authority. The board may issue revenue bonds and collect rates, rentals, and charges for use of facilities.

Regional Arts and Cultural Districts

These districts are formed by resolution of a county or a combination of counties, municipalities, or townships. They operate cultural facilities and support existing arts and cultural organizations. A district's board of trustees is appointed by the governing bodies of the governments which created it. It may collect rents and charges, and with voter approval, levy property taxes and issue bonds.

In counties with a population greater than 500,000, such districts may, as an alternative, be governed by the board of county commissioners. In such cases, the district is not counted as a government. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Regional Solid Waste Management Authorities (1988 Law)

Under this law, authorities providing solid waste collection and disposal services are created by resolution of one or more counties or board of directors of a joint solid waste management district, after approval by a majority of the municipal and township governments in the area served. A board of trustees governs each authority; it includes representatives appointed by each participating county, as provided in the agreement creating the authority, plus members appointed jointly by the municipal and township governments served. The authorities may fix fees and charges and may issue revenue bonds.

Regional Transit Authorities

Regional transit authorities may be established by any county or by two or more counties,

municipalities, or townships by resolution or ordinance of their governing bodies. If an authority is created exclusively by action of one county, the authority board members are appointed by the county commissioners. If an authority is created by two or more governments, its board members will be appointed by public officers specified in the initiating resolution. If an authority is created by one county and two municipalities, where the county has at least five hundred thousand residents, its board members will be appointed by the county commissioners and the leadership in the two most populous municipalities. The authorities may impose rates and charges for services, accept grants, and issue revenue bonds. The authority may also issue general obligation bonds, levy sales and use taxes, and levy ad valorem taxes upon voter approval.

Regional Water and Sewer Districts and Authorities

These districts may be created by the court of common pleas on petition of one or more municipal, township, or county governments, or any combination thereof, and after hearing. A board of trustees selected in a manner determined by each district governs each district. The districts may levy special assessments, fix and collect rates and charges, issue bonds, and with voter approval, may levy ad valorem taxes.

Sanitary Districts

Sanitary districts to provide sewerage, garbage disposal, and water supply facilities, to take pest abatement measures, or to prevent stream pollution, may be established by the court of common pleas, on petition of land-owners or of any governmental corporation, after public hearing. A board of directors, whose appointment depends on the type of district involved, governs each district. The district board may issue bonds, levy ad valorem taxes and benefit assessments, and impose charges for services.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Ohio law provides that each county constitutes a soil and water conservation district. An elected

board of supervisors governs each district. The district may levy special assessments and receive revenue from donations, gifts, and contributions. The district may also receive state aid, county general fund contributions, charge and collect rents and charges, and the proceeds from a county ad valorem tax.

Transportation Improvement Districts

Districts to construct or improve road, public place, building or other infrastructure are established by resolution of the board of county commissioners. A board of trustees governs the districts; its members are appointed based on two methods provided by the authorizing state legislation. The district board may issue revenue bonds, levy benefit assessments, receive Federal and state aid, and impose charges for projects. Districts may also levy a motor vehicle license tax, upon voter approval.

Watershed Districts

These districts are established after a map and description of the proposed district are prepared by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and filed with the secretary of state and each participating county. The participating counties, at an organizational meeting of the president (or designated representative) of each board of county commissioners, appoint a board of directors to administer the district. Fiscal requirements of each district are prorated among the constituent counties on the basis of the taxable value of real and personal property in the district.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Ohio that have certain characteristics of governmental units but that are classified in census statistics as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see "Public School systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Among the subordinate agencies and areas listed below, some represent "special taxing areas" within the territory of an established government. This method of financing additional services in limited areas by property taxation, while also used by some municipal and township governments in a few states, is more widely utilized by county governments.

Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (state). This authority was created by act of the legislature to finance air pollution control facilities. A board of seven members, five of whom are appointed by the Governor, plus the director of environmental protection and the director of health ex officio, governs the authority. The authority may make loans and grants, fix rents and other charges, accept grants and contributions, and issue revenue bonds.

Ohio Building Authority (state). This authority was established by act of the legislature. Authority board members are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate. The authority may fix rents and charges for its facilities and may issue revenue bonds.

Ohio Higher Educational Facility Commission (state). This commission was created by act of the legislature to finance facilities for institutions of higher education. The commission consists of nine members, including eight members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the Chancellor of the Ohio board of regents ex officio. The commission may fix rentals and other charges and may issue revenue bonds.

Ohio Housing Finance Agency (state). This agency was created by act of the legislature to provide mortgage credit for low and moderate income housing. A board of eleven members, including nine appointed by the governor with the consent of the senate, plus the director of commerce and the director of development ex officio, governs the agency. The agency may fix interest rates, fees, and charges; accept grants and contributions; and issue revenue bonds.

Ohio Public Facilities Commission (state). This commission was created by act of the legislature. It consists of the following State officials: the Governor, the state auditor, the state treasurer, the secretary of state, the attorney general, and the director of budget and management. The commission may issue revenue bonds payable from rentals and charges for facilities.

Ohio Turnpike Commission (state). This commission was established by act of the legislature to build, operate, and maintain the Ohio Turnpike. It consists of four members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the following officials ex officio: the director of transportation, the director of budget and management, the director of development, one member of the senate appointed by the president of the senate, and one member of the house appointed by the speaker of the house. The commission may issue revenue bonds and collect tolls and fees.

Ohio Water Development Authority (state). This authority was created by act of the legislature to build and finance water development, solid waste treatment, wastewater treatment, and energy resource development facilities. The authority board consists of eight members, of whom five members are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the directors of natural resources, environmental protection, and development, who serve in an ex officio capacity. The authority may make loans; receive rents, rates, and other charges; and issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

State

Buckeye Tobacco Settlement Financing Authority
Cultural Facilities Commission
eTech Ohio Commission
Mining districts
Ohio Agricultural Financing Commission
Ohio Expositions Commission
Ohio Fair Plan Underwriting Association
Ohio Rail Development Commission
Ohio School Facilities Commission

Ohio State Lottery Commission
Ohio State University Housing Commission
Partnership for Continued Learning
State university housing commissions
Third frontier commission
Trapping and fishing districts

County

Convention facilities authorities
County bridge commissions
County emergency planning districts
County road districts
County transit systems
County tuberculosis control units
Countywide emergency management agencies
General health districts
Joint county and county alcohol, drug addiction,
and mental health service districts
Joint county emergency medical services
districts
Joint county public defenders
Joint county tuberculosis clinics
Joint detention and juvenile facilities districts
Joint sewer districts
Port authorities serving a single county
Regional arts and cultural districts governed by
county commissioners
Regional authorities for emergency management
(serving two or more counties)
Sewer districts
Solid waste management districts (formerly
garbage and refuse disposal districts)--1953 law
Veterans service commissions

Municipal

City bridge commissions
City health districts
City sewer districts (sanitary and storm)
City water supply districts
Joint economic development districts
Joint municipal improvement districts
Joint sewer districts
Port authorities serving a single municipality
Rapid transit commissions
Resort area taxing districts (municipal)
Special improvement districts
Union cemetery boards

Township

Fire districts
Joint economic development districts
Joint township cemeteries
Joint township police districts
Lighting unincorporated districts
Port authorities serving a single township
Resort area taxing districts (township)
Road districts
Township police districts
Union cemetery boards
Waste disposal districts

Ohio laws also provide for various types of local
areas for election purposes and administration of
justice.