

Chapter 6

Local Government

At the conclusion of this chapter, students will be able to:

1. Recognize the structure of local governments;
2. Appreciate the impact local governments have on their daily lives; and
3. Understand the roles of members of local government.

Three Branches of Local Government

Local governments do not have constitutions. They usually receive a charter from the state government. The people usually elect the executive and legislative branches.

Executive

Mayor

Usually elected and is responsible for the day-to-day business of running the city

Legislative

City Council

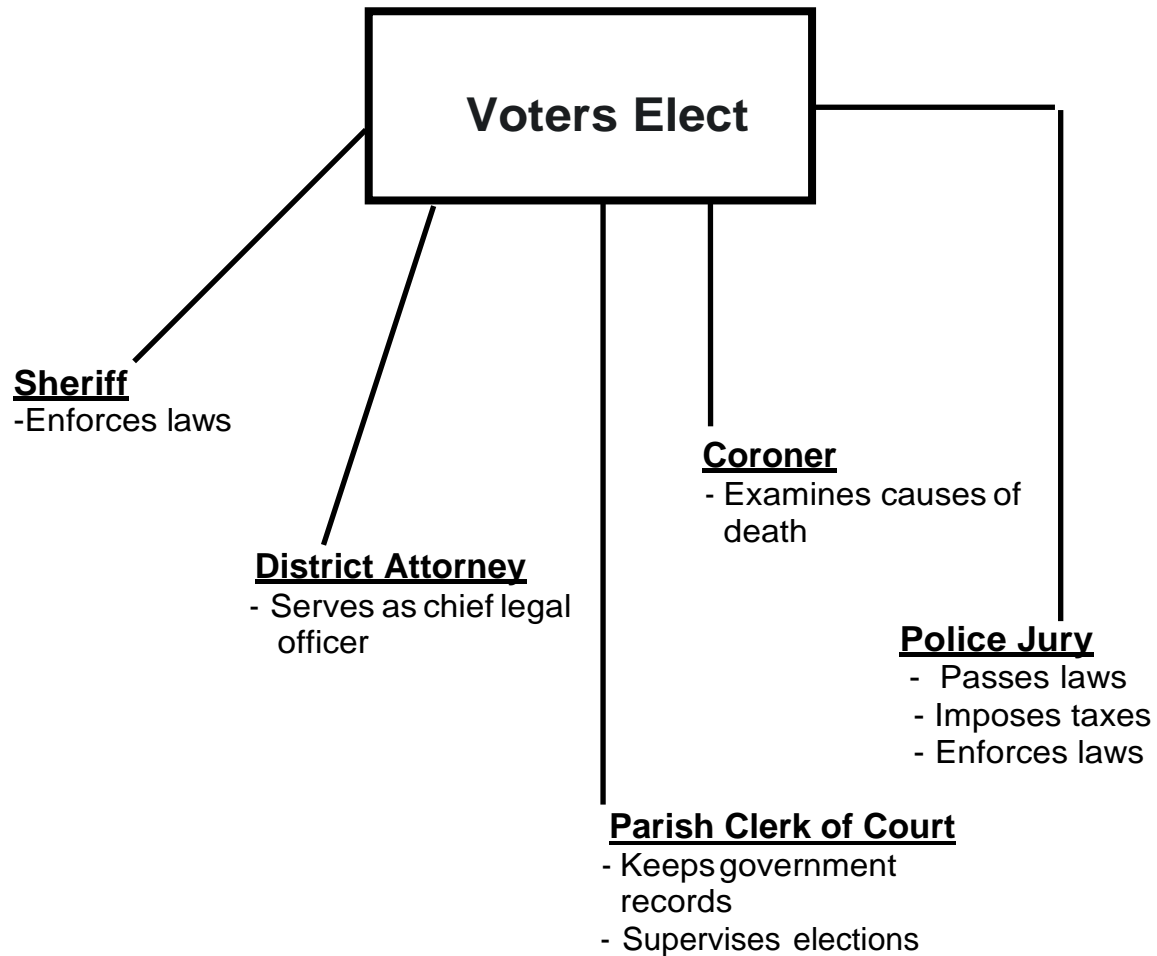
Usually elected and is responsible for making laws and directing the affairs of the city

Judicial

City Courts Parish Courts

Handle local issues, such as traffic laws, criminal law, and small claims. May be appealed to the state appellate courts.

Organization of Parish Government

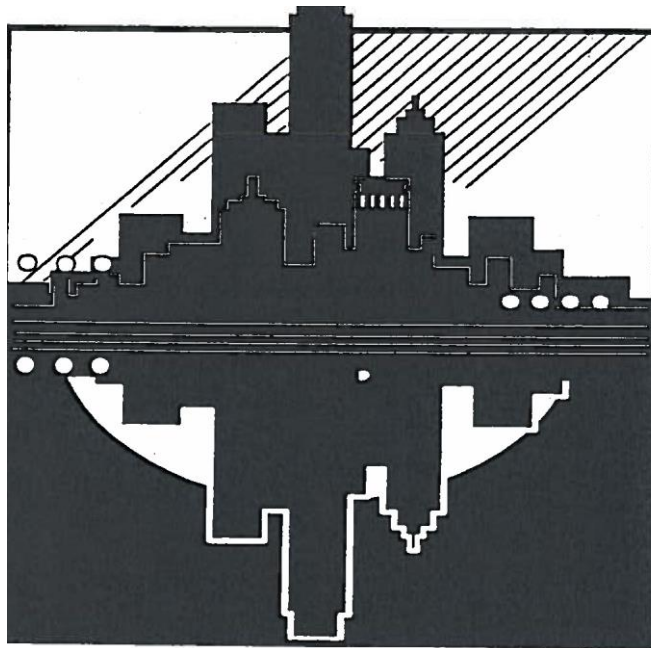


Louisiana's 64 Parishes

Acadia	Madison
Allen	Morehouse
Ascension	Natchitoches
Assumption	Orleans
Avoyelles	Ouachita
Beauregard	Plaquemines
Bienville	Point Coupee
Bossier	Rapides
Caddo	Red River
Calcasieu	Richland
Caldwell	Sabine
Cameron.	St. Bernard
Catahoula	St. Charles
Claiborne	St. Helena
Concordia	St. James
De Soto	St. John the Baptist
East BatonRouge	St. Landry
East Carroll	St. Martin
East Feliciana	St. Mary
Evangeline	St. Tammany
Franklin	Tangipahoa
Grant	Tensas
Iberia	Terrebonne
Iberville	Union
Jackson	Vermillion
Jefferson	Vernon
Jefferson Davis	Washington
La Salle	Webster
Lafayette	West Baton Rouge
Lafourche	West Carroll
Lincoln	West Feliciana
Livingston	Winn

Local Governments

Local governments are those units of government found within a state. Their purpose is to serve the needs of local communities. Local governments vary greatly in size and structure. The United States Constitution grants no power to local governments. It does not even mention their existence. Usually, state constitutions describe the duties and powers of local governments. The only powers that a local government has are those that the state gives it. Most often, a state grants these powers in a **charter**, or plan of government. This charter describes the local government and gives it authority over its affairs.



Parish Officials

Sheriff

The sheriff is the parish's chief law enforcement officer. The Sheriff's department, which usually includes deputies and uniformed officers, enforces court orders and manages the parish jail. The sheriff's department usually shares law enforcement duties with a separate police department.

District Attorney (DA)

The district attorney is the parish's chief legal officer. The district attorney investigates crimes, brings charges against suspected lawbreakers and prosecutes the case in court.

Coroner

The coroner is an official who tries to establish the cause of unusual or suspicious deaths. The coroner usually works closely with the sheriff's department or the police department.

Clerk of Court

The parish clerk is similar to the state government's secretary of state. The parish clerk keeps official government records and often supervises parish elections. In its function as recorder, the clerk of court's office receives, files and enters on a daily register all deeds, mortgages, and other instruments to be recorded in the public records of the parish.

Assessor

The assessor examines all taxable property within the parish and estimates how much it is worth. The parish's property tax is based on the assessor's estimates.

Police Jury

The Police jury has the power to make regulations for its own government. Its power includes, but is not limited to, regulating the proportion and directions and the making and repairing of roads, bridges, causeways, dams, and highways. The police jury's power allows it to do work to further the best interests of its parish.

City Government

City government is the most common form of local government. The oldest and most widely used form of city government in the United States is the mayor-council form of government. Under this form of city government, responsibility for governing the city is divided between separate legislative and executive branches. The legislative branch consists of a group of officials called the **city council**. A chief executive called the **mayor** holds executive responsibility. City government also includes officials such as a clerk and a city attorney. Separate departments handle police and fire protection, recreation, roads and buildings, health and welfare, and other matters.

Mayor

As chief executive, the mayor directs the workings of the city government. Often, the mayor is one of the most visible city leaders, addressing current issues, planning new developments, and working with state and national leaders. The mayor also acts as a symbol of the city and as its key spokesperson. In this role, the mayor might welcome visitors or lead ceremonies to open a new shopping center. A mayor's term of office varies from city to city. It usually ranges from two to four years.

City Council

The city council is the city's legislative body. The council's most important duty is to make laws for the city. As part of this duty, city councils often lead investigations and study ideas for changes in policy. They also work on long-range plans for new projects. These may include road development or sewage disposal.

Most councils have six or fewer members. In large cities, however, the council may be much larger. The length of time that city council members serve varies from one to six years.

Chief of Police

The chief of police has general responsibility for law enforcement in a city/municipality. He is charged with the enforcement of all ordinances within the city/municipality and all applicable state laws. He is obligated to perform all other duties required of him by ordinance. The chief of police reports directly to the mayor. The chief of police must also reside within the city/ municipal limits of said city/municipality.

The Court

Court Functions

1. Serves as a symbol of justice
2. Settles disputes
3. Protects society from crime
4. Punishes offenders
5. Provides a natural setting for "doing" Justice

The judge should not be young; he should have learned to know evil, not from his own soul, but from late and long observation of the nature of evil in others; knowledge should be his guide, not personal experience.

-Plato

How Much Do You Know About Your City and State?

1. Your state's governor: _____
2. Your state's lieutenant governor: _____
3. Does your state have a house of representatives? _____
4. Your senate leader _____
5. The dominant party in your state senate: _____
6. The dominant party in your state house of representatives: _____
7. Your governor's political party: _____
8. Your governor's political party: _____
9. Does your city or town have a council? ____ How many members? _____
10. Your mayor's political party: _____
11. Superintendent of your school district: _____
12. State capital: _____
13. State motto: _____
14. Describe the state flag: _____
15. State flower: _____
16. State tree: _____
17. State bird: _____
18. Year your state joined the Union: _____
19. All states that share borders with your state: _____