

Constable

The constable serves various court papers. They help the justice court judge, the sheriff, and other elected officials in preserving the peace. There is one constable elected for each justice court district in a county.

Appointed Offices

County government has several officials not elected by the voters. These may include a county administrator, board attorney, county engineer, or others which are supervised by the board of supervisors. While these officials are not elected, they each serve a needed and important role within county government. County services are greatly enhanced by their efforts.

One important office in county government is the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Your county Extension staff works to make your county a better place in which to live. They provide educational programs and individual assistance in agricultural & natural resources, family & consumer science, youth development (4-H), community development, and other topics.

County Government is Your Government

Whatever problem you are having in your county, remember your county officials are there to serve you. They continue the American tradition of representative government. If you have a problem or a suggestion, call them or go to see them at the "people's house" - your county court house.



**Marshall County Courthouse,
Holly Springs, Mississippi**



Mississippi Association of Supervisors

The Mississippi Association of Supervisors is a non-profit, educational support facility for Mississippi's 82 counties. Since its inception in 1908, MAS has been committed to the improvement of county government across our state, keeping in line with its foremost mission - "to bring into favorable notice the opportunities and resources of the various counties." By fostering an exchange of ideas among the counties, MAS members have been instrumental in implementing efficient and effective grassroots government that serves the general welfare not only of the counties themselves, but of the entire state. We welcome you to find out who the people are that make county government - and our organization - thrive.

www.mssupervisors.org



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™ EXTENSION SERVICE

Extension Center for Government and Community Development

The Extension Center for Government and Community Development (GCD) is a unit of the Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSU-ES). For over thirty-five years the GCD has been a leader in the development and implementation of educational programs for county and municipal officials, has provided technical assistance to local units of government, and has provided specialized publications for local government officials.

The GCD serves the educational needs of the major associations of local government officials, working with these associations to plan and implement a variety of educational programs and workshops. In cooperation with a variety of state agencies, the GCD manages certification programs for county purchase clerks, receiving clerks, inventory control clerks, tax assessors, municipal clerks, election officials, and homeland security and emergency management officials.

The Center also works in the area of leadership development providing training programs for citizens and local government officials. GCD staff provide technical assistance to counties and municipalities in such areas as general management, financial administration, personnel administration, leadership development, economic development, community facilities and services, and solid waste management.

Through these activities, the Center assists local government officials, local units of government, and associations of local government in their efforts to improve governance at the grass roots and delivery of services to the citizens of Mississippi. For more information on the programs and activities of the GCD visit our web site at www.gcd.msucare.com or contact the Center for Governmental and Community Development, Mississippi State University Extension Service, Box 9643, Mississippi State, MS 39762, E-mail: cgt@ext.msstate.edu, telephone number 662-325-3141, and fax number 662-325-8954.

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County Government and You



Counties are the heart of local government in Mississippi. It has been this way since Mississippi became a state in 1817 and remains so today. Throughout the nation, and especially in the South, county government has played an important part in people's lives.

In colonial days, county government was organized for basic purposes. It provided protection for settlers on the frontier and administered justice through the courts. A few frontier roads were maintained, and some counties set fares for ferries and toll roads. County government recorded and preserved important documents. It was a simple but important part of civil government in a developing land.

County government has come a long way. There are 82 counties in Mississippi. Each county provides many services. Of course county government still provides for protection of citizens through its sheriff's office. It still houses the courts where laws are enforced and where citizens can file claims to seek judicial remedies for their problems.

Modern county government provides educational services to thousands of Mississippi young people through public schools. In many public schools, adult education is also provided. Education is one of the most important functions of local government.

County government manages the construction and repair of many miles of county roads. It concerns itself with public health by handling solid waste disposal. Food establishments are inspected. The counties also administer food stamp and social welfare programs.

County planning, industrial development, and advice to farmers and homemakers are a few examples of other ways county government serves you.

Recording public documents is still a vital part of county government. Important events that touch our lives are recorded with the county. Birth and death records, wills, deeds, and marriage licenses are some of the papers that tell the story of you and your family.

The history of the people of Mississippi is found in its county courthouses.

As you can see, your county courthouse is more than just a home for the courts. It houses the offices where a range of public business is conducted. Your tax dollars go to provide these services. Take time to learn what's going on in the "people's house"- your county courthouse!

How County Government Works

Here's a glimpse at the organization and responsibilities of some offices in your county government.

Board of Supervisors

The pacesetter for county government is the five-member board of supervisors. This board is the chief policy making and administrative body or unit of the county.

Each county is divided into five districts, and each one elects a supervisor. Members serve terms of four years. The election for supervisors in Mississippi is held at the same time as election for Governor.



While each member may handle some administrative duties in his or her beat, the members set policy together. While each member represents his or her district or beat, all of the members are expected to look after the good of the county as a whole.

Many people think that road construction and maintenance are the only things supervisors do. It is a very important role to be responsible for hundreds of miles of local highways and roads. The board can also set traffic regulations for county roads. Supervisors however, look after many things in addition to roads.

The power to tax and the power to appropriate budget funds are the two most significant powers the board exercises. With these powers the board decides which part of county government gets the largest slice of the "budget pie."

The board can borrow money for the county. It must comply with various purchasing and administrative laws designed for economical and efficient government. It approves the county's bills before they are paid.

Board meetings are held at least once a month and in most counties, twice a month. Meetings are open to the public. The board of supervisors serves a unique role in Mississippi counties: it is the one body which oversees almost everything that goes on in county government.

Tax Assessor-Collector

The duties of the assessor/collector are usually performed by one person, although in some larger counties the tax assessor and the tax collector are two separate offices.

The assessor lists and places a value on all real estate within the county and also on personal property (which includes such things as machinery, office equipment, and similar items). Maps, records, and other documents which help establish the value of such property, are kept. The assessor presents these tax rolls to the board of supervisors for approval. He or she also helps homeowners file for homestead exemption which allows some of the homeowner's property to be exempt from property (ad valorem) taxes.

The collector makes sure that those who have had property assessed pay their taxes. He or she also collects various privilege taxes, automobile tag taxes, and various fees (for example, boat registration fees).

Accuracy of records is very important since this office is involved in the collections of taxes which help fund a variety of government services.

Sheriff

The office of the county sheriff is charged with seeing that law and order is maintained in the county and that the orders of the circuit, chancery, and county courts and the board of supervisors are enforced.



The sheriff has direction over the county jail and serves as the chief law enforcement official in the county.

Chancery Clerk

The chancery clerk performs many duties which help the machinery of county government run smoothly.

First, the chancery clerk is the clerk for the board of supervisors. He or she keeps the records of accounts for county funds and makes deposits of the various receipts from taxes, licenses, fines, and other sources. The clerk helps the board of supervisors by advertising invitations for bids on purchases and may even serve as a purchasing agent for the county. The clerk must keep accurate records and minutes of board meetings.



Another important duty is to serve as the clerk for the chancery court and to act for the chancery judge in certain cases.

The chancery clerk also records and registers deeds and other important public documents. These are official records and can be helpful in making claims in court, in protecting your property rights, and enforcing contracts.

The chancery clerk performs many administrative responsibilities, including serving as a personnel officer, acting as administrator of federal funds, and others. The clerk may also be known as the county auditor or the county treasurer, since these are also some of the duties performed by the clerk.

Circuit Clerk

The circuit clerk serves as the voter registrar. He or she keeps marriage licenses, jury lists, civil and criminal trial dockets, and licenses of doctors and certain other professionals. The clerk summons various juries. He or she also receives papers when candidates qualify to run for public office.

The circuit clerk also keeps all court records, filings, and papers associated with the circuit court.

Justice Court Judge

Each county in Mississippi elects between two (2) and five (5) justice court judges. The number of judges is determined by the county's population. This court is often called the "people's court" since judges hear common cases involving disputes of less than \$3,500 and misdemeanor offenses. A justice court judge may also marry people and serves as a notary public.