

# HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS



# INSTRUCTIONS

**Step 1:** Grab your phone.

**Step 2:** Open your browser and go to [kahoot.it](https://kahoot.it)

**Step 3:** In a minute, we're going to give you a code to join the game. Enter the 6-digit code in the field where it says "Game PIN." Or you can use your phone to scan the QR code you see on the screen.

**Step 4:** Enter a nickname and click "Ok, go!"



# ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

## FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL

HAVE OVERLAPPING AND SEPARATE:

- POWERS
- RESPONSIBILITIES
- JURISDICTIONS

**GOVERNMENT WHO TAKES CARE OF WHAT?**

Your food is safe. Your state has roads and schools. Your community has parks and police. Government makes these things happen... and more.

**KIDS DISCOVER**

**FEDERAL**

- Safe travels!** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ensures that flying is safe.
- How much?** The U.S. mint manufactures and distributes the coins we use. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing prints our paper money.
- Ensuring national security.** The Department of Defense provides the military forces needed to prevent war and keep our country safe.
- Protecting plants and animals.** U.S. Fish and Wildlife focuses on protecting endangered species.
- To your health!** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves all medicines and sets food safety standards.
- Learning more on your behalf.** The National Institute of Health (NIH) supports research into the causes and cure of diseases.

**STATE**

- Behind the wheel.** Every state has a Department of Motor Vehicles. When you're old enough to get a driver's license, that's where you'll go.
- Go fish!** But first you'll need a state-issued fishing license. The same goes for hunting.
- Tests to pass.** Lawyers and other professionals must pass a state licensing exam in the state where they plan to work.
- Ratify!** Any amendment to our Constitution must be approved, or ratified, by 38 states.
- Getting well.** A state controls all the hospitals within its borders and exerts direct control over specific facilities.
- Electing our President.** Every state chooses electors for the Electoral College. Electors cast votes for whichever candidate gets the majority of votes in the state.

**FEDERAL AND STATE**

- How green it is!** National and state governments create and maintain about 300 million acres of parks and forests.
- Correctional facilities** – prisons – house people who have been convicted of a crime.

**FEDERAL AND LOCAL**

- Vote!** The Constitution establishes how national elections are held. Local governments, with State oversight, arrange for polling places where people cast their vote.

**STATE AND LOCAL**



- Your teachers, your schools.** Local communities hire teachers, build schools, and provide transportation to and from school. What gets taught is the state's responsibility.

**FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL**

- Road trip!** About 4 million miles of roads criss-cross the U.S.
- Safe and sound.** Community police, state troopers, the National Guard, and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) work to fight crime.

**LOCAL**

- 911 Quick, call 9-1-1!** Your community's first responders – firefighters, police, and EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) – are there in minutes.
- Electricity, natural gas, and water** are necessities to be managed and distributed. Local communities are in charge.
- Read, play, enjoy.** If you like libraries, sports fields, parks, and other recreation facilities in your community, say thank-you to your local government.
- P-U!** That's what you might say without the garbage collection provided by your community's sanitation department.
- Bumpy-bump.** Without your local government to repair the roads and fix potholes, you may end up with a rough ride.



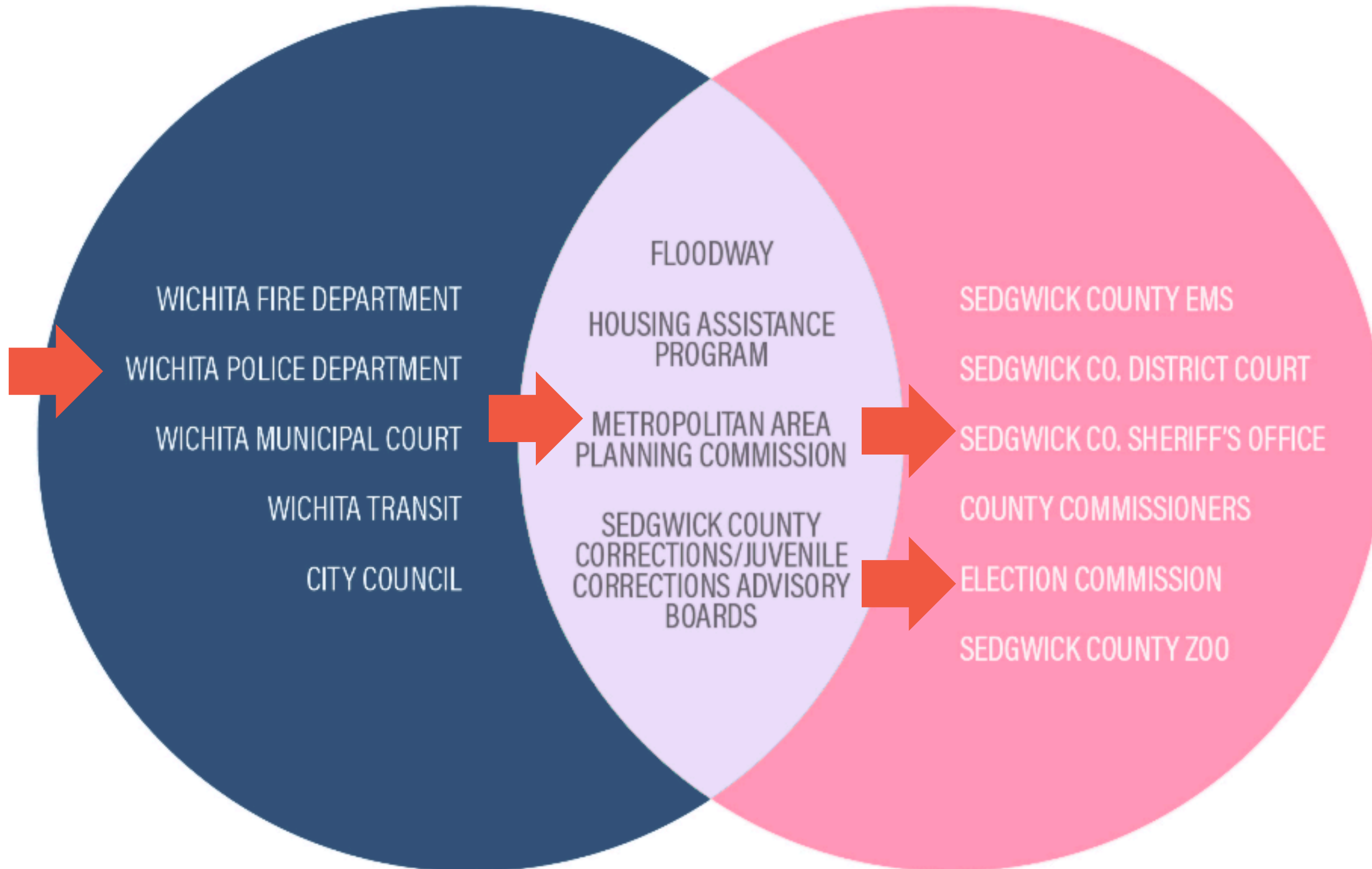


**EXAMPLES OF  
LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
SERVICES**



# CITY OF WICHITA

# SEDGWICK COUNTY



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS THE CONSTITUENTS' FORUM FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

**“FREEDOM OF SPEECH”  
BY NORMAN ROCKWELL  
AND THE UPDATED  
VERSION**



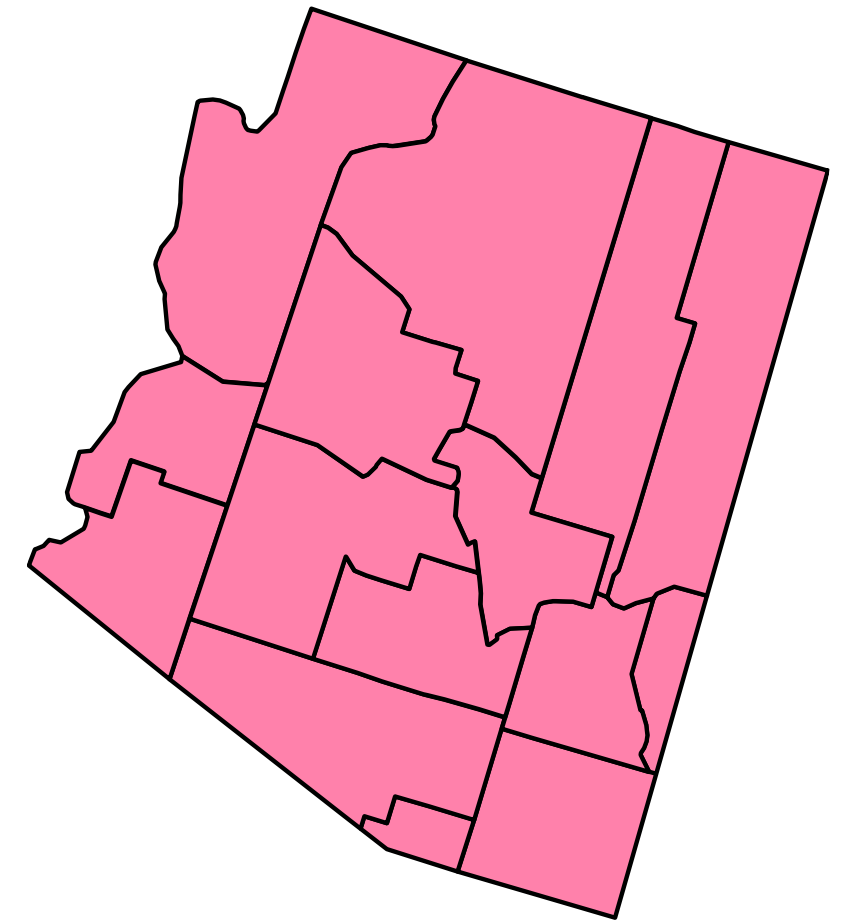


# LOCAL GOV 101

YOUR ROAD MAP  
THROUGH LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSISTS OF TWO TIERS

- **Counties**
- **Municipalities**



# **TIER ONE: COUNTIES**

- **ALSO REFERRED TO AS BOROUGHS IN ALASKA AND PARISHES IN LOUISIANA**
- **IN SOME STATES, COUNTIES ARE DIVIDED INTO TOWNSHIPS OR AREAS WITH LIMITED GOVT FUNCTION OR ABOLISHED (CT)**

# COUNTY BACKGROUND

- **COUNTIES ARE ONE OF AMERICA'S OLDEST FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, DATING BACK TO 1634.**
- **THE COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (OVER 3,000 IN THE US) ARE CHARTERED AND GOVERNED UNDER STATE CONSTITUTIONS / LAWS**

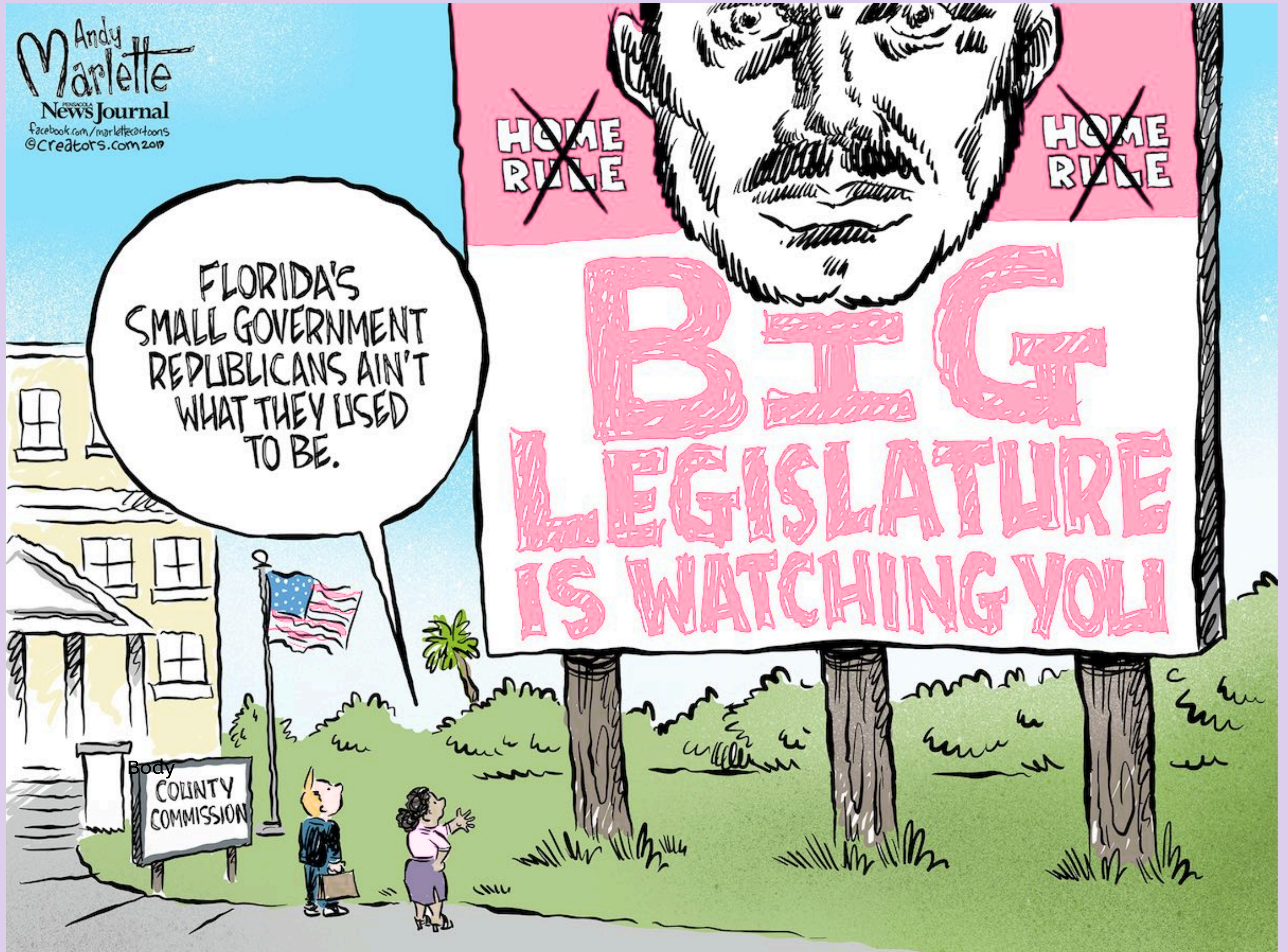
# TIER TWO: MUNICIPALITIES

- **CITIES**
- **TOWNS**
- **VILLAGES**
- **TOWNSHIPS**
- **BOROUGHES**
  - **NOT THE SAME AS BOROUGHES IN LA**

# MUNICIPALITIES BACKGROUND

- **EXIST AT THE PLEASURE OF STATE GOVTS**
- **GRANTED POWER BY STATE GOVERNMENTS**
- **STATE GOVERNMENTS MAY REVOKE MUNICIPAL CHARTERS, ELIMINATING ANY MUNICIPALITY**

**CHANGING  
ATTITUDES  
ABOUT THE  
GOVERNMENT  
THAT IS  
CLOSEST TO  
THE PEOPLE**



WAIT... YOU'RE  
GUTTING LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT?

YOU CAN'T BE  
TRUSTED  
WITH LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT...



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...AND PUBLIC  
EDUCATION?

...OR PUBLIC  
EDUCATION...



YEAH, WELL...  
YOU JUST WAIT  
'TIL TH' NEXT  
ELECTION'...

...AND CERTAINLY  
NOT ELECTIONS...



# **SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

- **FIRE DISTRICTS**
- **SCHOOL DISTRICTS**
- **US POST OFFICE DISTRICTS**
- **OFTEN INCLUDE OVERLAPPING DISTRICTS / OVERLAPPING GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES**

# **STRUCTURES**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE**

**LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE, AND**

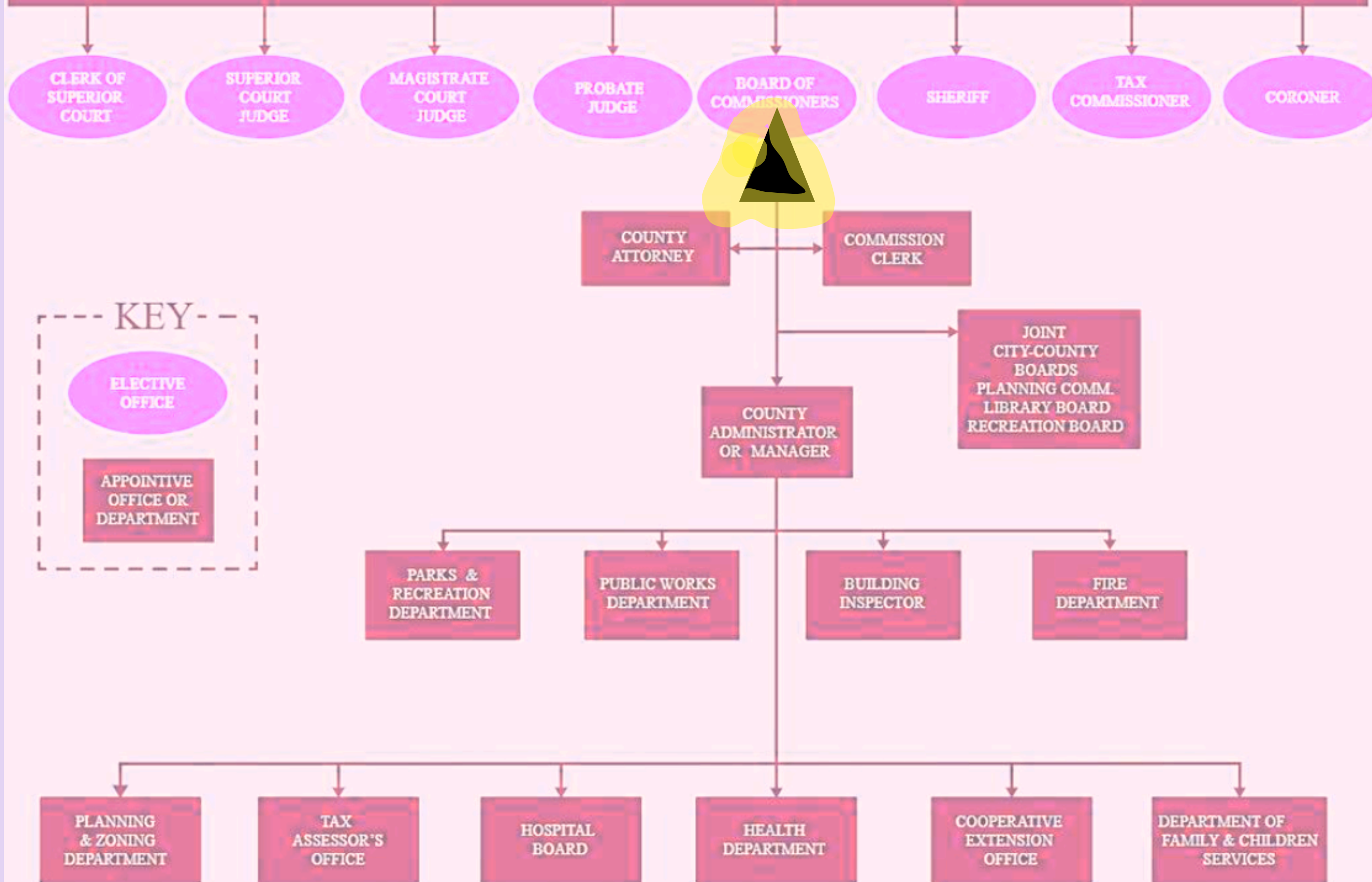
**JUDICIAL BRANCHES AND POWERS**

- **EXERCISED ONLY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF STATE AND FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY LAW**

# **ELECTED COUNTY BOARDS**

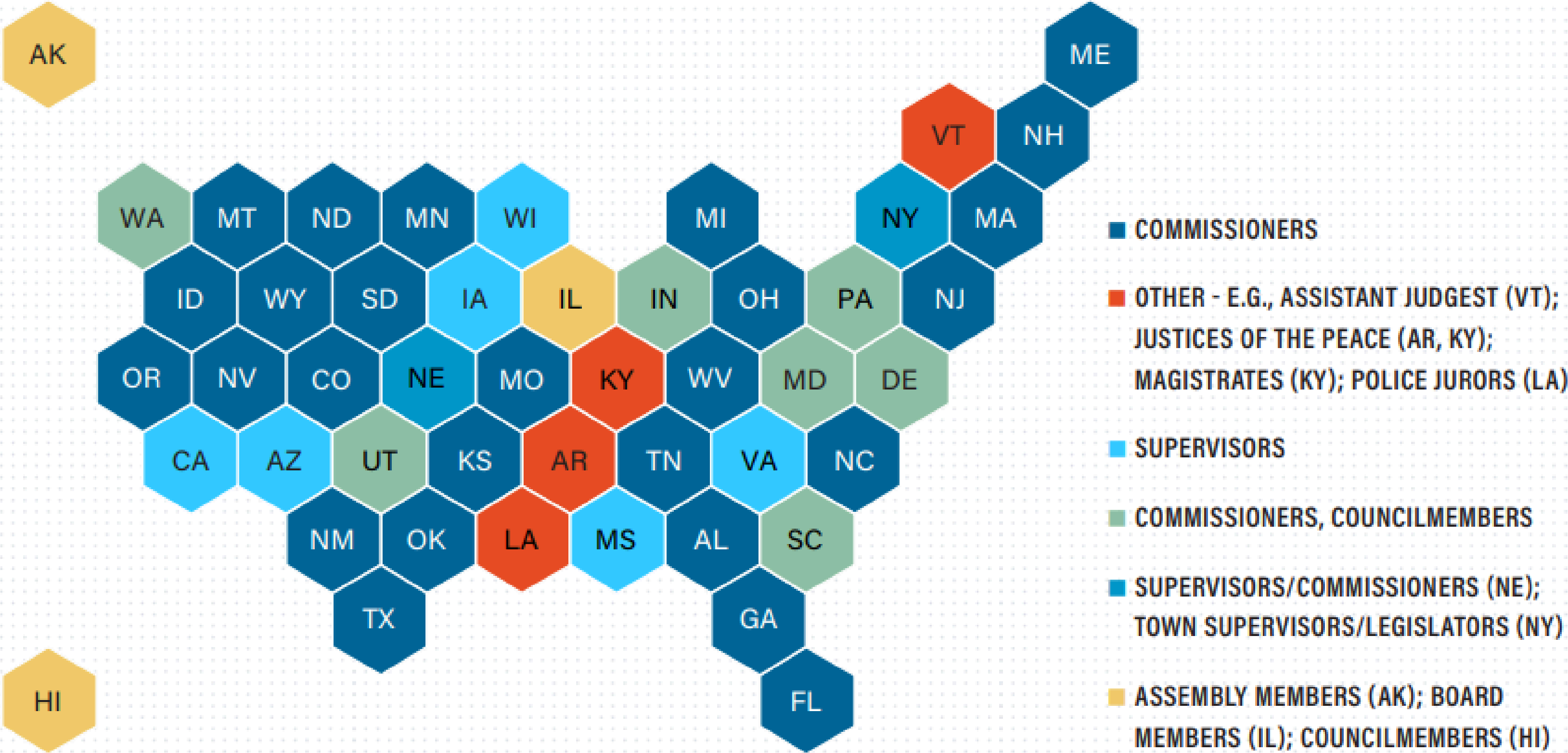
- **MOST COUNTY BOARDS GENERALLY EXERCISE LEGISLATIVE AND OFTEN EXECUTIVE POWERS**
- **DEPENDING ON THE STATE: COUNTY BOARDS ARE OFTEN KNOWN AS COMMISSIONS, COUNCILS, ASSEMBLIES, FISCAL COURTS, LEVY COURT COMMISSIONS, COUNTY LEGISLATURES AND COMMISSIONERS' COURTS**
- **RESPONSIBLE TO THE VOTERS**

# COUNTY VOTERS



# COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS HAVE A VARIETY OF TITLES

*Titles for Members of the County Legislative Body*

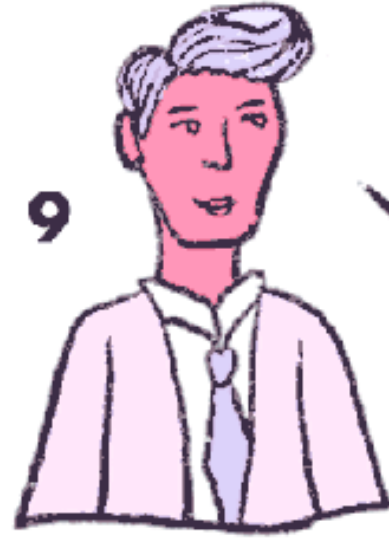


# **ELECTED COUNTY BOARDS**

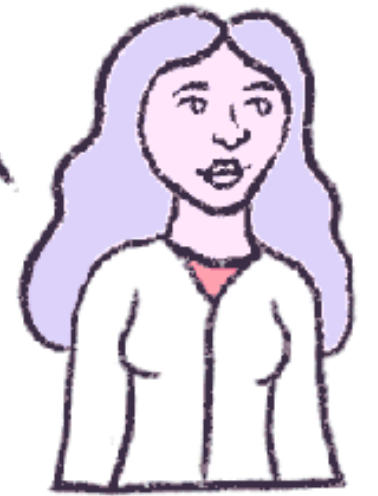
- **COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS ARE ELECTED BY DISTRICT AND/OR AT LARGE**
- **THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1132 ELECTED COUNTY BOARDS (WITH NO APPOINTED ADMINISTRATORS AND NO ELECTED ADMINISTRATORS)**

**AT LARGE = WHOLE COUNTY**

**DISTRICT 9**



**DISTRICT 10**



**DISTRICT 8**



**DISTRICT 2**



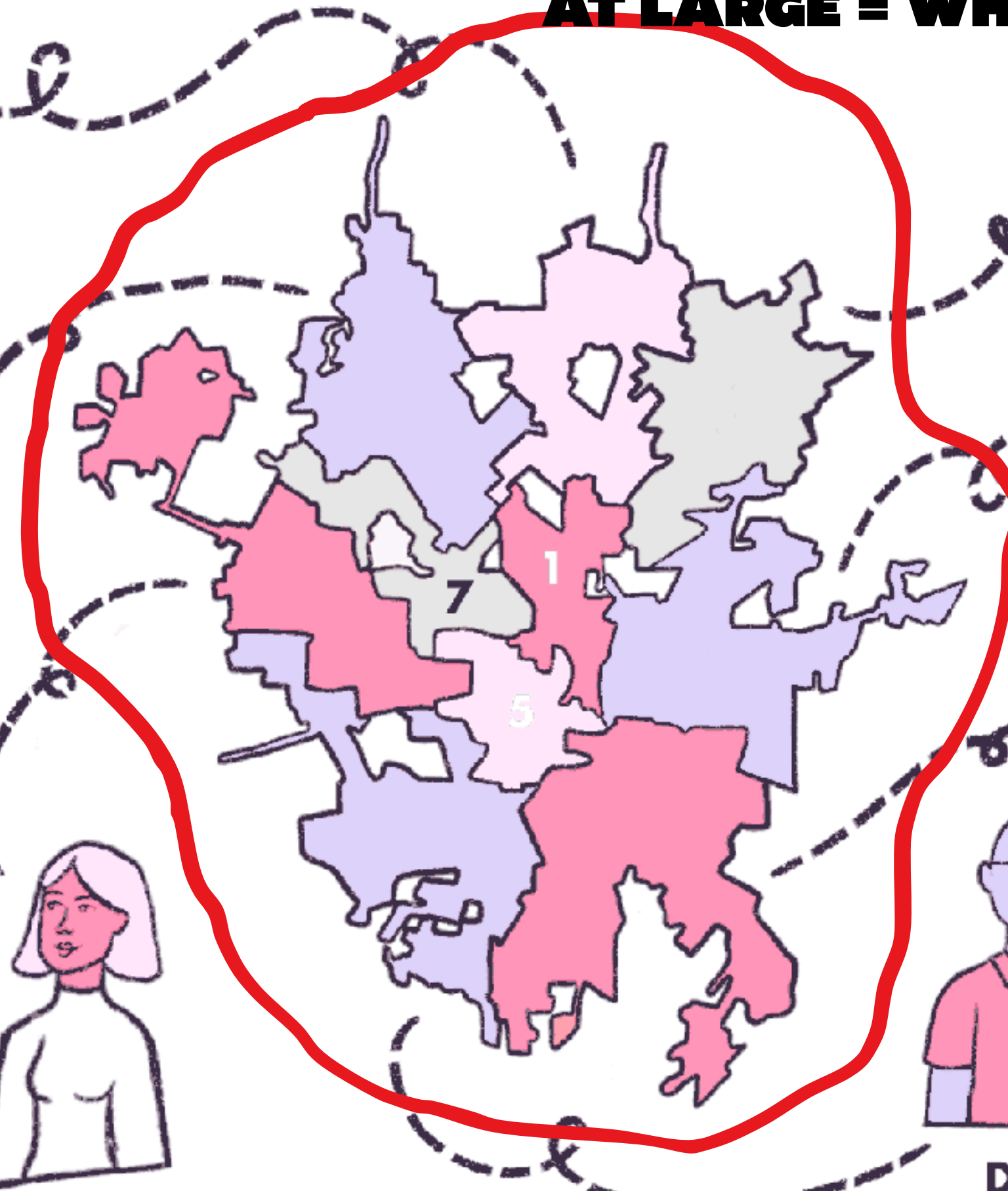
**DISTRICT 6**



**DISTRICT 4**



**DISTRICT 3**



# **ELECTED COUNTY BOARDS**

**THE BOARD (COMMISSION) IS TYPICALLY  
RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

- **ADOPTING THE COUNTY BUDGET**
- **OVERSEEING COUNTY FINANCES**
- **SHAPING LOCAL PUBLIC POLICY**
- **APPROVING THE HIRING OF COUNTY EMPLOYEES**
- **AND, IN SOME CASES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING ACTIVITIES.**

# **A MAJORITY OF COUNTIES OPERATE UNDER THE TRADITIONAL COMMISSION FORM OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

**HOWEVER, OVER 50 PERCENT HAVE  
SHIFTED TO OR ADDED:**

- THE APPOINTED COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**
- THE ELECTED EXECUTIVE TYPE**
- A COMBINATION OF APPOINTED/ELECTED**

# COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

- The **county administrator** (**executive branch**) is typically the **top appointed career official** who serves the county's legislative body by carrying out the **policies and procedures** established by its members/county board.

# COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

- Overseeing the **daily operations** of the county government
- The formation of the **county budget**
- Management of programs and **services**
- **Partnering** with the private sector, nonprofits, academia and others for the benefit of the community

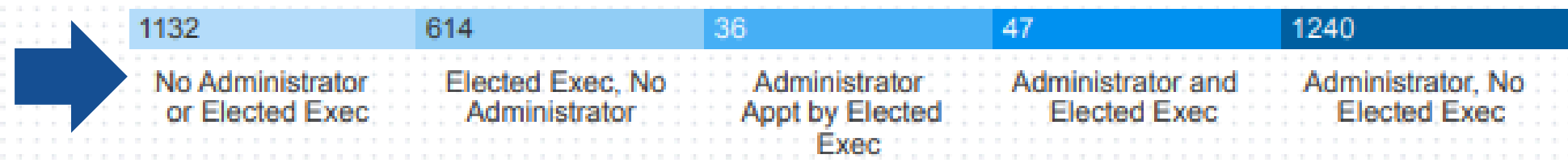
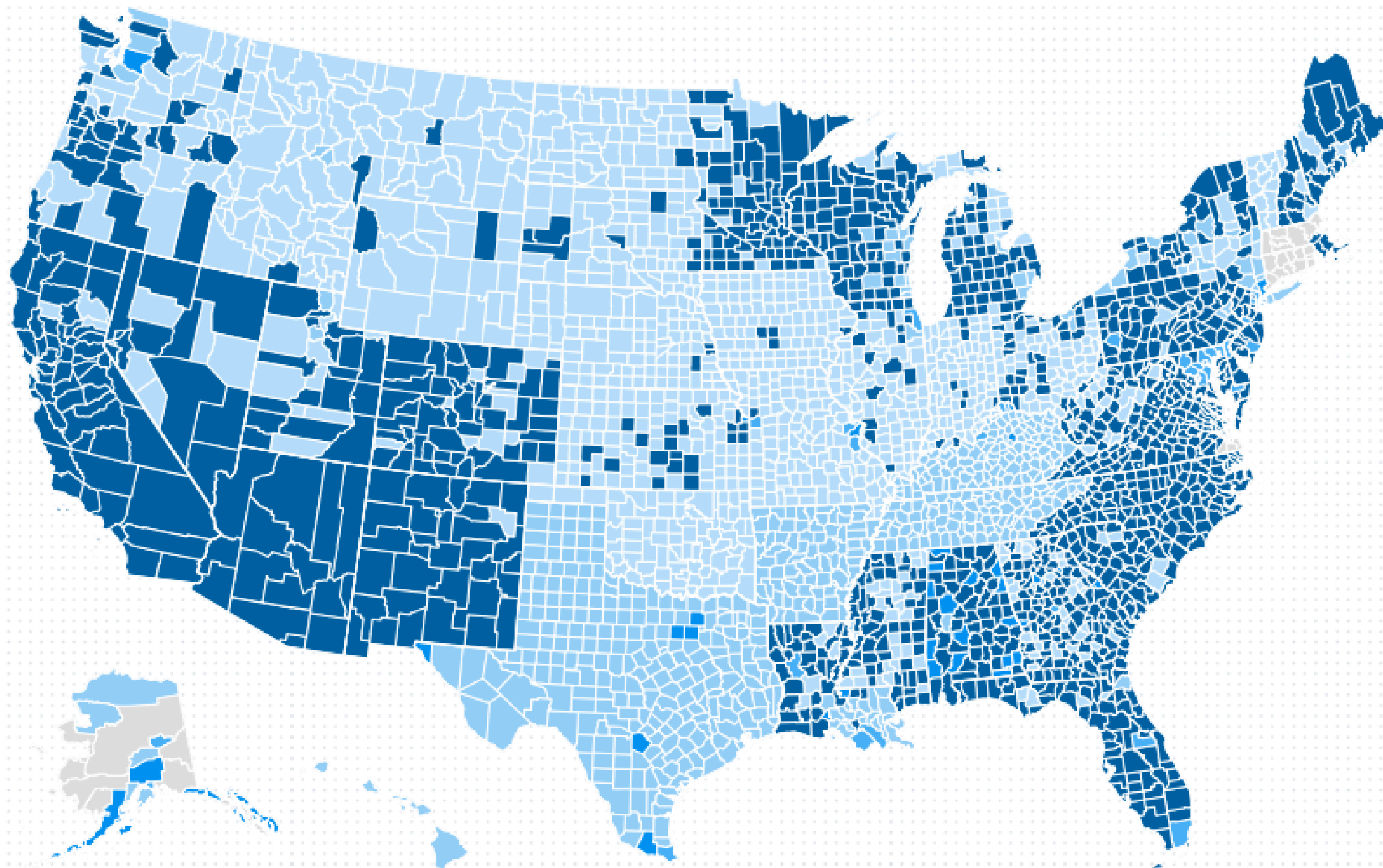
# ELECTED COUNTY EXECUTIVE

- The **elected county executive** is the chief administrative officer with executive authority
- Most often, an elected county executive has **the title** of county executive; however, this executive might also carry the title of **county judge, mayor, chief executive officer, chair or board president**

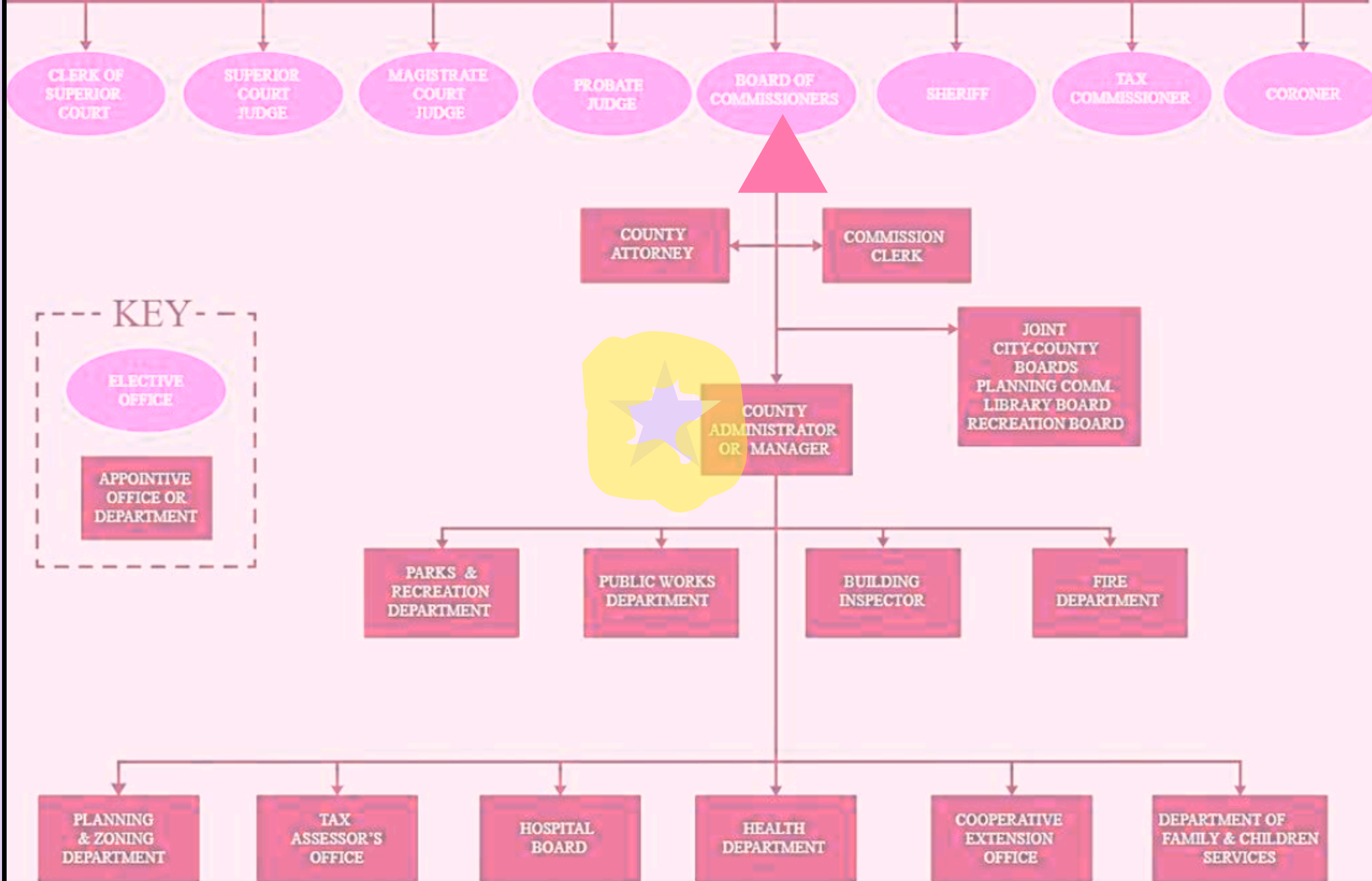
# ELECTED COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Typically, the elected executive has the **authority** to:

- **Veto** ordinances enacted by the county board (subject to their possible override)
- **Hire and fire** department heads.



# COUNTY VOTERS



**ALSO . . . .**

**THERE ARE ADDITIONAL  
INDEPENDENTLY  
ELECTED COUNTY  
OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR SPECIFIC COUNTY  
FUNCTIONS**

# **WINNER TAKES ALL**

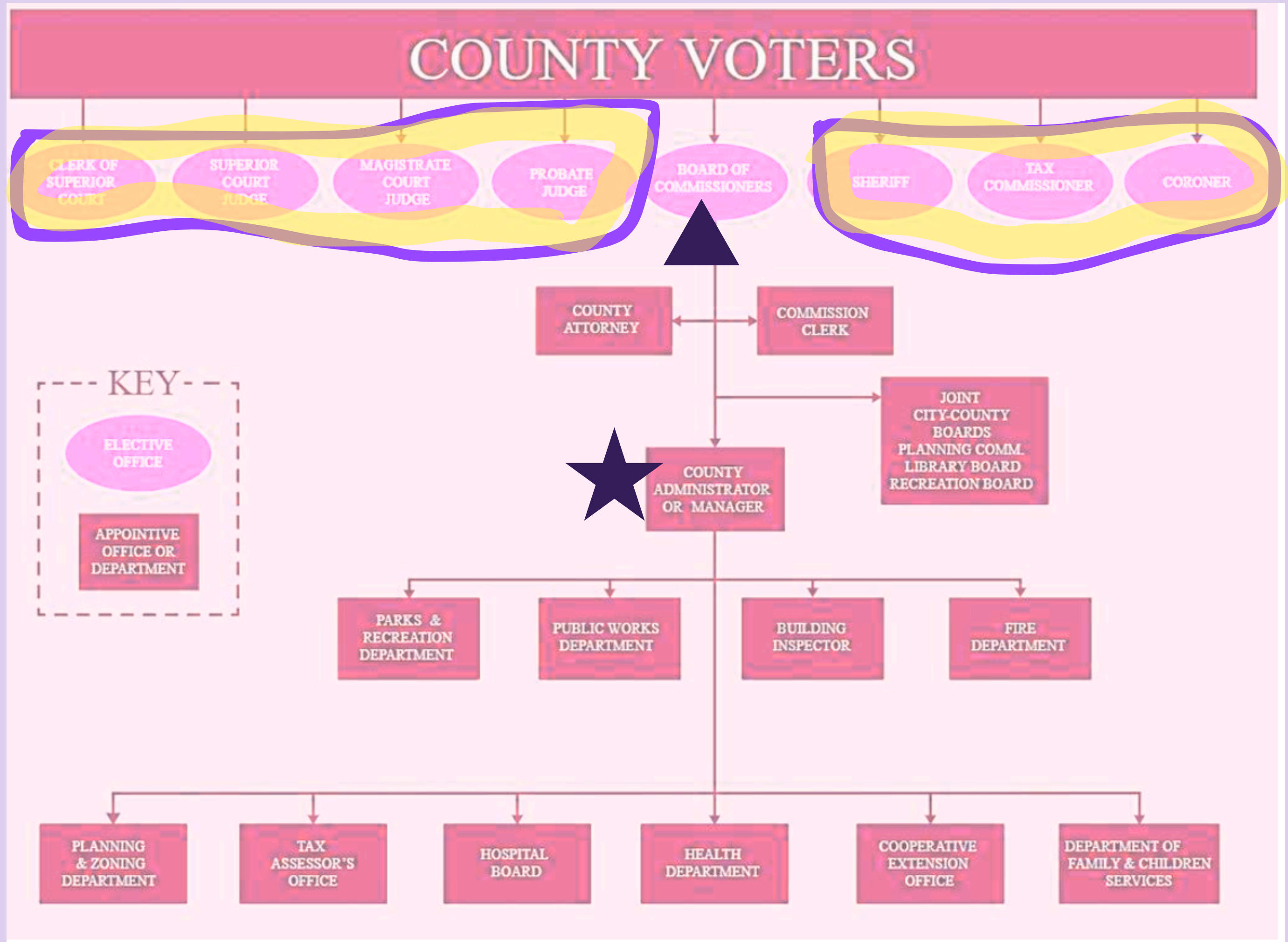
## **(MAJORITY OR PLURALITY)**

- **The candidate with the **most votes** wins in **single member** elections (example - independently elected)**
- **The candidates with the **highest plurality** of votes win in **multiple member** elections (example - a city or county council election)**

# ADDITIONAL ELECTED OFFICERS

- Examples include assessor, auditor, circuit judge, clerk of the board, **clerk of the court** (judicial), coroner, **county attorney**, county engineer, **judge of the probate, district attorney**, public administrator, recorder, **register of deeds, school superintendent, sheriff**, surveyor, tax collector and treasurer.

**IN PURPLE . . .**  
**ARE**  
**INDEPENDENTLY**  
**ELECTED**  
**OFFICERS**  
**RESPONSIBLE**  
**ONLY TO THE**  
**VOTERS AND**  
**BUDGETS**



# JUDICIAL

- Typically, a **district attorney** (elected) will serve the same function as a prosecutor in bringing **criminal** cases to court
- A **county attorney** (commonly not elected) generally handles **civil legal issues**, though will sometimes also function as a district attorney in handling criminal cases, often in more rural, unincorporated areas

**COLORADO SPRINGS**

**EL PASO COUNTY**

**CITY GOVERNMENT VS COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

BROKEN UP INTO 3 BRANCHES

BROKEN UP INTO 3 BRANCHES

**EXECUTIVE**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**LEGISLATIVE**

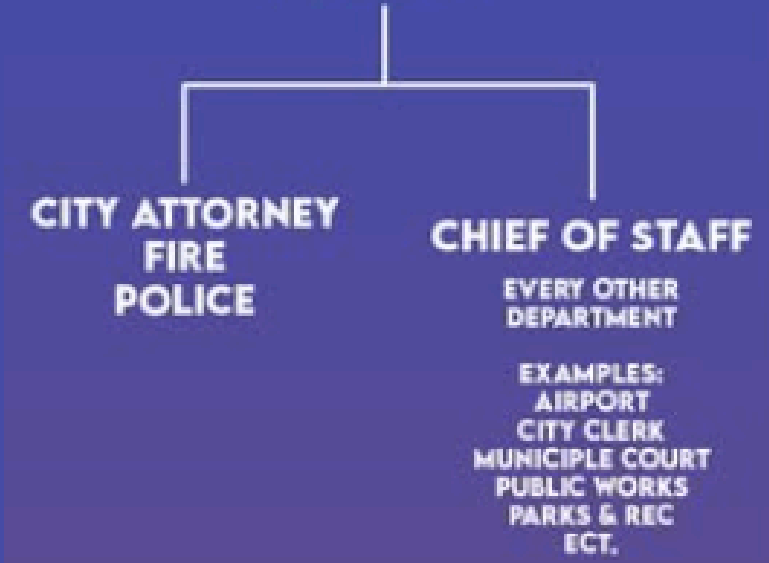
**LEGISLATIVE**

**JUDICAL**

**JUDICAL**

**EXECUTIVE  
MAYOR**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**



**EXTRA POSITIONS**

CLERK & RECORDER  
SURVEYOR  
CORONER  
ASSESSOR

**LEGISLATIVE**

**LEGISLATIVE**

**CITY COUNCIL**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**



**JUDICIAL**

**JUDICIAL**

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER & CITY ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CLEAN, EFFICIENT  
& FUNCTIONING

# LOCAL GOVT.

LETHAL TO:

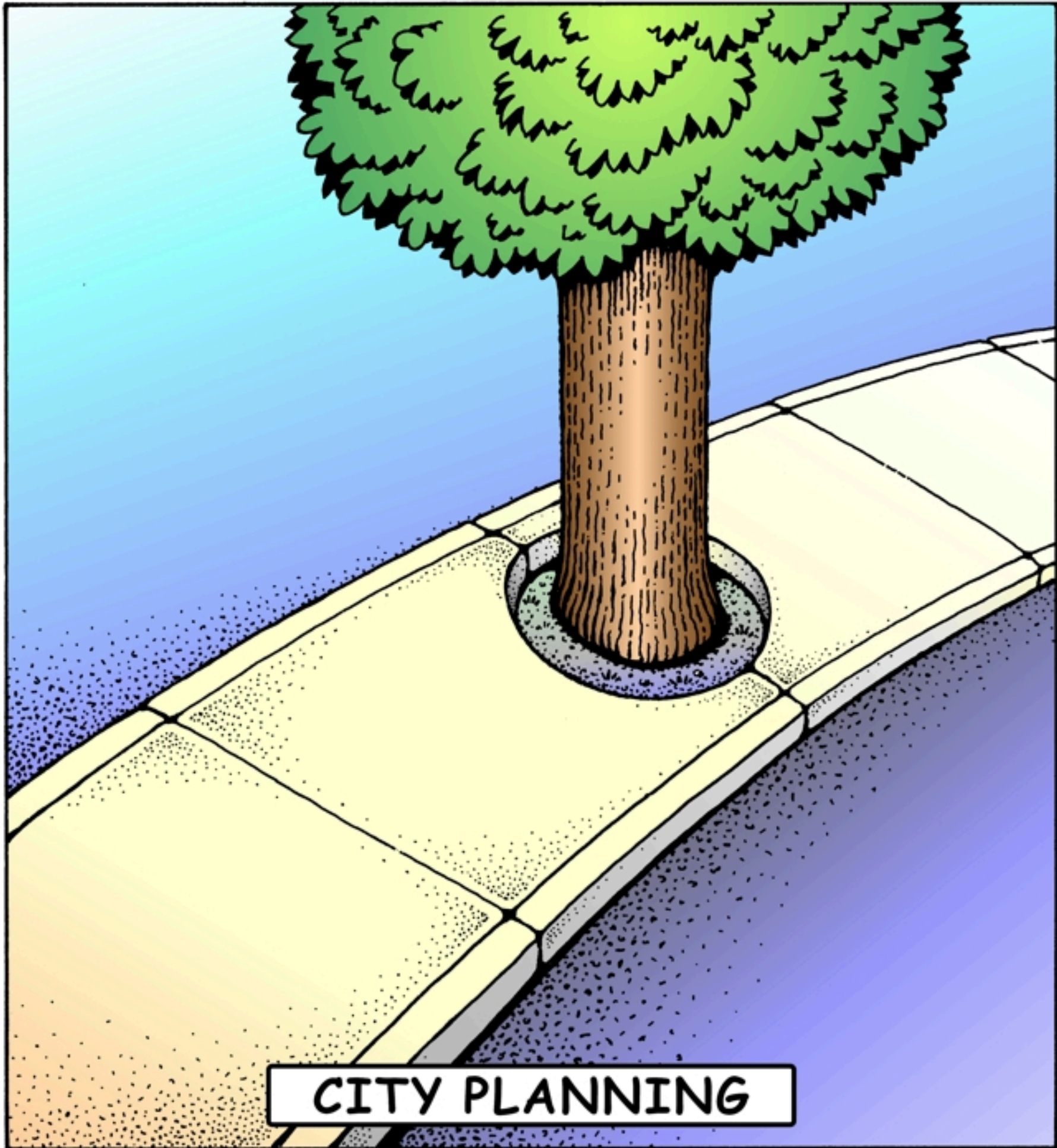
ACTIVE  
INGREDIENTS:

- WASTE COLLECTION
- WORKING SEWERS
- CLEAN WATER SUPPLY
- BASIC SERVICES



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

- **Annexation** – to add property to a municipality (usually voluntary, petition)
- **Zoning** – to define the use of the land (residential, commercial, industrial)
- **Ordinance** – a local law



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# STATE POWER OVER THE COUNTIES

- County governments derive the extent of their authority from the state governments
- The two basic doctrines on county authority, **Dillon's Rule** and **Home Rule**, often coexist within the same state

# STATE POWER OVER THE COUNTIES

- **Home Rule** counties are theoretically free to determine local affairs within a set list of state restrictions
- **Dillon's Rule** counties, theoretically, are given explicit directives from the state from which they must not deviate

**DILLON'S  
RULE**  
- STATE CONTROL

**HOME  
RULE**  
LOCAL AUTONOMY



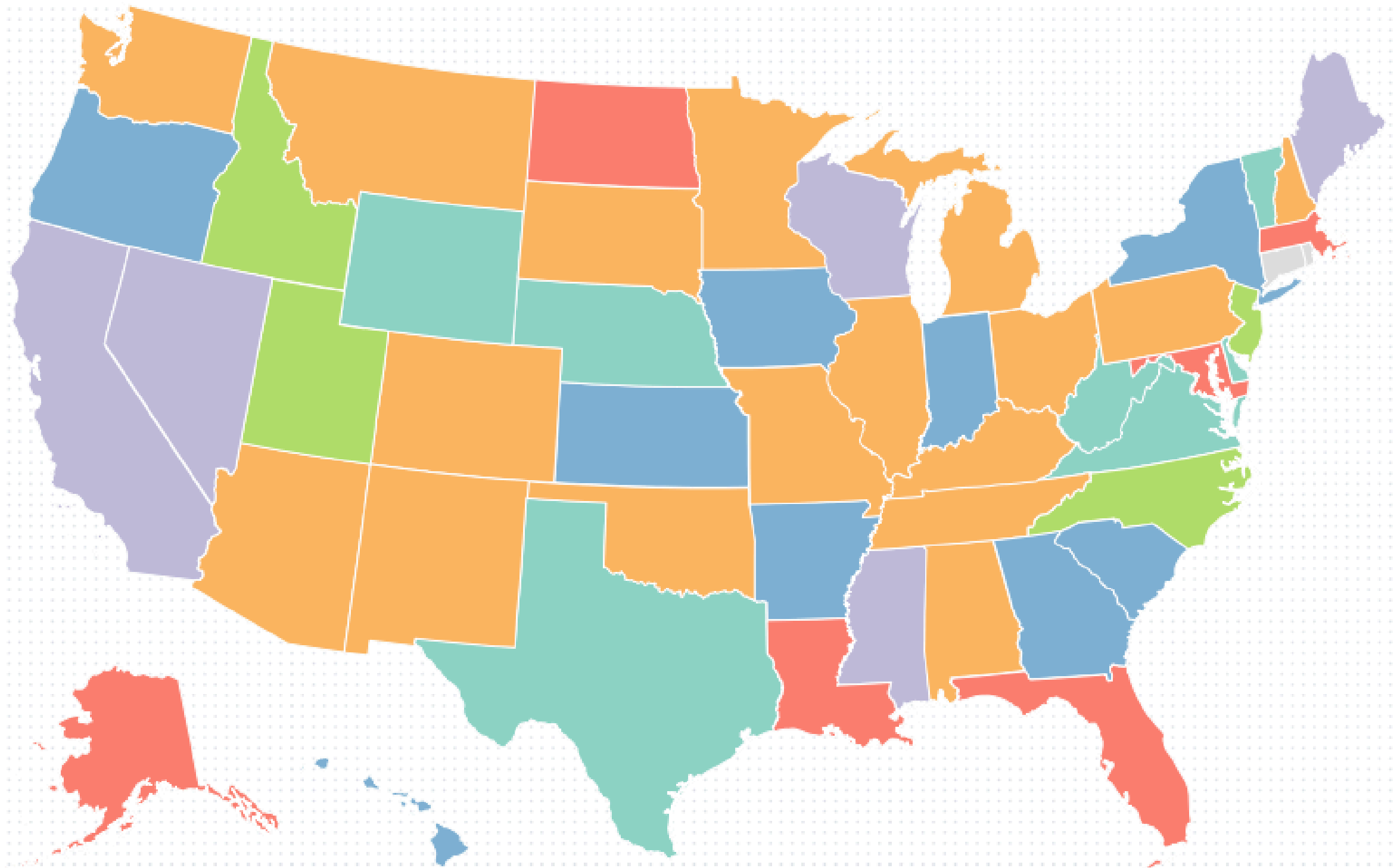
# STATE POWER OVER THE COUNTIES

- **In practice**, as **Home Rule** does not necessarily entail complete flexibility to determine local affairs, so **Dillon's Rule** does not necessarily entail stringent inflexibility

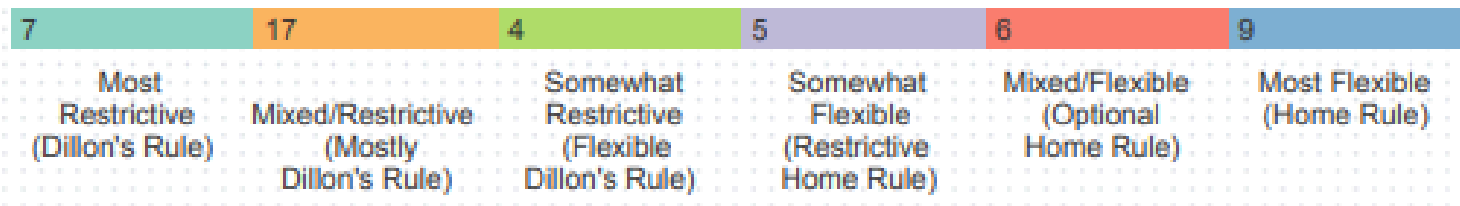
# AND THEN WE ADD COURT INTERPRETATIONS . . .

- **Three states (New Jersey, North Carolina and Utah) have most or all counties operating under Dillon's Rule, but with a directive that courts should broadly interpret the grants of authority given to counties in the state constitution and statutes – greatly expanding county government authority**

## COUNTY AUTHORITY LEVEL



Source: NACo research, 2022



# HOW DO WE GET INVOLVED?

We concentrate on going local . . .

- **Participate** in local gatherings, protests, marches
- **Attend** local government meetings and speak



# GOING LOCAL!

- **Write** letters to the editor/  
elected officials
- **Engage** in local social media,  
display yard/window signs
- **Advocate** and share info  
widely and deeply
- **Join** an interest group

**KATIE FAHEY (MI): POSTED ON FB AND INITIATED A GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN TO BAN PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING IN HER STATE**





# KEEP GOING LOCAL!

- **Support** local candidates / political party - volunteer time, money, talent, canvass, house meetings, poll greeter...
- **Run for office** or volunteer to serve on a **community board**

**WOMEN ARE  
A MAJORITY  
ELECTED TO  
CITY  
COUNCIL OF  
SAN LUIS  
OBISPOS,  
CALIFORNIA  
FOR THE  
FIRST TIME  
EVER! 2018**



**“DON’T FIGHT BACK THAT [NEGATIVE] RHETORIC  
WITH WORDS, BUT WITH ACTIONS.”**



**PATY FUNEGRA  
LA COCINA**

**WORKFORCE AND SMALL BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT**



# Q&A Time!

