

Kentucky

Kentucky ranks 22nd among the states in number of local governments, with 1,439 as of June 2002.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (119)

The entire area of the state is encompassed by county governments except for the area of the former county of Fayette. Effective January 1, 1974, Fayette County consolidated with the City of Lexington to form a single governmental entity known as “Lexington-Fayette Urban County.” Effective January 6, 2003, the city of Louisville and Jefferson County consolidated into the Louisville-Jefferson County Metro Government. These two governments are counted as municipal governments, rather than as county governments, in census reporting.

Counties are governed by a fiscal court composed of the county judge/executive and the justices of the peace or the county judge/executive and three elected county commissioners. The county judge/executive is an elected official who is a member of and the presiding officer of the fiscal court. Counties operate under home-rule.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (424)

Municipal Governments (424)

Municipal governments in Kentucky are the cities. The cities are classified by the legislature. The classification of cities includes urban counties and first- through sixth-class cities. No city may be changed from one class to another except by legislative action. Communities must have 300 or more inhabitants to incorporate. Cities of the first class may operate under home-rule.

The “unincorporated urban places” in Kentucky are geographical areas only, without associated governmental structure. They are not counted as governments.

Township Governments (0)

Kentucky has no township governments.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (176)

School District Governments (176)

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

County school districts

Independent (city) school districts

The county school districts encompass the entire area of the county except for localities within an independent school district. The independent school districts, by contrast, usually embrace cities of the first five classes, although some cities, including Louisville, are served by county school districts. An elected board of education governs each school district. The board may determine the amount of local school tax levies and may issue general obligation bonds with the approval of the voters.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Kentucky has no dependent public school systems.

Other Educational Activities

A municipal university may be established by a first-class city. The city board of alderman may levy taxes, make annual appropriations of general revenues, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue bonds for the support of the municipal university. The University of Louisville, which operated under this law, is now part of the state system of higher education.

General law provides for municipal colleges in second-class cities administered by boards of trustees appointed by the mayor and the legislative body of the city. For the support of the college, the city governing body may levy taxes with voter approval, appropriate funds, and issue bonds. A municipal college is classified, for census purposes, as a dependent agency of the city it serves. It is not counted as a separate government.

A municipal college support district may be established by the fiscal court of a county in which such a municipal college is located to provide for a tax levy outside the city area. Such a district is classified as a dependent agency of the county government and is not counted as a separate government.

In addition, boards of education in cities of the second class may establish or acquire junior colleges and levy ad valorem taxes for their support upon voter approval. These are classified as part of the school district operating them and are not counted as separate governments.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (720)

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

Ambulance Service Districts

Districts of this type are established by county ordinance after voter petition and approval by the fiscal court. As an alternative, these districts may be established by ordinance without petition. Each ambulance service district is governed by a board of directors representing the counties and cities served; the number of directors selected by the governing body of each county or city is determined by statute. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and set service charges.

Breaks Interstate Park Commission

This commission is counted under “Virginia—Special District Governments.”

Conservation Districts

Conservation districts may be formed by the state soil and water conservation commission on petition of landowners in the area of the proposed district and after public hearing and referendum of property owners. A board of seven supervisors governs each district; the initial board includes three supervisors appointed by the state soil and water conservation commission and four elected supervisors. Their successors are elected. The districts may require contributions from landowners for services rendered. A district may request operating funds from the fiscal court through the levy of a mileage tax or from the county's general funds.

Watershed conservancy districts may be formed as subdistricts of a conservation district upon petition, hearing, and referendum. Subject to the approval of the conservation district board, the elected board of directors of these watershed conservancy districts may levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments and issue bonds.

Agricultural districts for the preservation of farm land may also be created. These districts are governed by the conservation district supervisors in an ex officio capacity and are thus classified as dependent activities of the conservation district. They are not counted as separate governments.

Drainage Districts

Kentucky law provides for the organization of any of the following types of drainage districts that are counted as governments:

Drainage, levee, and reclamation districts—act of 1918
Drainage districts—act of 1912

Under the 1918 law, drainage, levee, and reclamation districts are established by the county. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The districts may levy assessments and issue bonds.

Under the 1912 law, drainage districts are established by county ordinance after voter petition and approval by the fiscal court. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. These districts may levy assessments and issue bonds.

Kentucky laws also provide for drainage corporations, listed below under “Subordinate Agencies and Areas.”

Emergency Service Boards

These boards are authorized in counties with a county-wide fire protection district and an interlocal agreement to provide fire service to the largest city in the county. Multi-county boards are authorized where at least one county meets the requirements. The boards replace existing fire protection, ambulance, or rescue squad districts. The boards are created by action of the fiscal courts of the participating counties. The board of directors is appointed by the county judge/executive(s) with the approval of the fiscal court(s). The boards may levy taxes. In addition, the participating counties may levy taxes for the benefit of the district. Upon dissolution, the fire protection, ambulance, or rescue squad districts replaced resume existence.

The Falls of the Ohio Interstate Park Commission

The Falls of the Ohio Interstate Park Commission, the jurisdiction of which extends into Indiana, was authorized by interstate compact. The commission consists of three commissioners appointed by the Governor of each of the two states. One of the Kentucky members is the Lieutenant Governor. This commission may issue revenue bonds and fix and collect fees. This commission was not reported in operation as of June 2002. Authorizing legislation for this commission has been repealed by Indiana.

Fire Protection Districts

Kentucky law provides for the organization of two types of fire protection districts—fire protection or volunteer fire department districts (established by order of the county judge/executive upon petition of voters). Both types of districts are governed by boards of trustees consisting of three members appointed by the county judge/executive and four members elected. District boards may levy ad valorem taxes. Both types of districts also may provide ambulance services.

Fire protection subdistricts may be created within the area of an existing fire district upon petition of landowners to the fiscal court. Subdistricts are governed by the fire protection district board, ex officio, and are not counted as separate governments.

For fire protection districts established by and governed by water district boards, see “Water Districts,” below.

Flood Control Districts

Flood control districts are created by the state commissioner of natural resources and environmental protection after petition of landowners and a public hearing. A board

of directors governs each district and is appointed by the county judges/executives of counties in the district and the mayor of any first-, second-, or third-class city within the district. The number of directors representing each member county or city is specified by statute. These districts may issue bonds and levy an annual ad valorem tax.

Hospital Districts

Hospital districts are established by the secretary for the cabinet of health services after petition of the voters to the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court. The governing body is a district board appointed by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court. In districts located in two or more counties, the board consists of at least one but not more than four members from each county based on population. Additional members are recommended by the secretary for the cabinet of health services for appointment by the county judge/executive, if necessary, to provide for a five-member board. Hospital district boards may issue revenue bonds, fix and collect charges for services, and levy ad valorem taxes.

Housing Authorities

Three of the four types of housing authorities authorized in Kentucky—county, regional, and city-county housing authorities—are counted as special district governments. Housing authorities may be established by resolution of the respective city or county governing bodies. The respective city or county governing bodies also appoint the housing authority commissioners. These housing authorities may issue bonds and establish and collect rentals and charges.

Municipal housing authorities are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Joint Water Commissions

Commissions for the joint supply of water may be formed by two or more cities, two or more water districts, or any combination of cities, water districts, and water associations. The commission is composed of members appointed by the participating entities. The commission may fix and collect fees and may issue revenue bonds.

Land Bank Authorities

Authorities to acquire tax delinquent property to provide housing and industries within a county are created by an interlocal agreement between any city, county, local school district, and the state. The authority governing body consists of one member appointed by each participating government. The authorities may fix rentals.

Levee Districts

These districts are authorized in counties with fewer than 200,000 population. The districts are established by county ordinance after voter petition and approval by the

fiscal court. In addition, multicounty levee districts may be formed. The governing body, a board of commissioners, is appointed by the county judge/executive. The district board may issue bonds and levy ad valorem taxes.

Louisville-Jefferson County Air Pollution Control District

This district was established under general law with special application to counties containing a first- or second-class city. The seven-member district board includes four members appointed by the county judge/executive and three members appointed by the mayor of Louisville. The district may certify each year the amount of ad valorem tax revenue it needs.

Other air pollution control districts in Kentucky are governed by the county governing body ex officio and are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Metropolitan Sewer Districts

Metropolitan sewer districts may be established by city ordinance to provide sewerage services in any county containing a first- or second-class city. A seven-member board governs each district; four members are appointed by the city mayor and three by the county judge/executive. The district may fix and collect rates for sewer services and may issue revenue bonds.

Construction subdistricts established by metropolitan sewer districts are dependent activities of the parent district and are not counted as separate governments.

Public Energy Authority of Kentucky

This authority was created under the interlocal cooperation act by the governing bodies of the cities of Carrollton and Henderson to provide natural gas services. The authority may issue bonds.

Public Library Districts

Under the 1960 and 1964 laws, public library districts may be created by one or more counties by county ordinance after voter petition and approval by the fiscal court. The governing body is a board of trustees chosen by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court from recommendations by the state department of library and archives. The districts may issue bonds and levy ad valorem taxes.

Under a 1944 law, regional libraries may be created by two or more cities or counties on the initiative of the governing bodies or may be created after voter petition and referendum. A board of trustees, appointed by joint action of the county boards of member counties, governs each

district. Their fiscal needs are met by county appropriations; the amount to be contributed by each member county is in proportion to the assessed valuation of the county.

Single-county and single-city public libraries created under the 1944 laws are not counted as separate governments. Public libraries established prior to June 13, 1944, are considered as operating under the authority of the 1944 law. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Public Road Districts

These districts may be established in any county containing a first-, second-, third-, or fourth-class city by county ordinance after voter petition and approval of the fiscal court. A board of directors appointed by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court governs each district. The district may issue bonds and levy special assessments.

Red Fox Tri-County Cooperative Corporation

This entity was created to design, construct, and operate the Red Fox Golf Course and promote tourism in Knott, Letcher, and Perry counties. The ten-member board of directors includes appointees by the counties and the Governor, plus state officials *ex officio*. The entity may fix and collect fees.

Regional Park Authorities

These authorities are created by the fiscal courts of two or more counties or by voter petition and majority vote in each participating county. The authorities are governed by a board of directors consisting of three citizens from each participating county appointed by the fiscal courts. Each fiscal court chooses from a list of candidates provided by the cities within the county and by the county planning commission if one exists. The authorities may levy taxes with voter approval and issue bonds.

Rescue Squad Districts

These districts are created by action of the fiscal court. The board of directors is appointed by the county/judge executive, the mayor of an urban-county, or the chief executive of another government. All appointments require the approval of the legislative body of the jurisdiction. The districts may levy taxes.

Riverport Authorities

These authorities may be created by one or more cities or counties with the approval of the state transportation cabinet. The authorities are governed by a board of directors appointed by the creating governments. The authorities may issue bonds and may fix and collect fees. The participating governments may levy taxes for the benefit of the authorities.

Sanitation Tax Districts

Sanitation tax districts may be established in counties with cities of the first class. A board of five members appointed by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court governs each district. The districts may levy *ad valorem* taxes.

Sewer Construction Districts

Sewer construction districts may be established by county judge/executive of any county having a metropolitan sewer district, upon petition of landowners. A board of commissioners, appointed by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court, governs each district. The districts may levy benefit assessments and issue bonds.

Construction subdistricts established by metropolitan sewer districts are classified for census purposes as adjuncts of the parent district and are not counted as separate governments.

Solid Waste Management Districts

Districts of this type are established by one or more counties by county ordinance after voter petition and approval by the fiscal court. The composition of the board of directors is determined by the fiscal court: (1) the district board may consist of the county judge/executive of each county in the district plus the mayor of the most populous city in each of these counties or (2) the district board may be appointed by the county judge/executive subject to confirmation by the respective fiscal court. Solid waste management districts may fix and collect fees, levy *ad valorem* taxes, and issue bonds. Districts established prior to June 17, 1978, may be named “garbage and refuse districts.”

Transit Authorities

Transit authorities encompassing two or more counties or cities may be established by joint resolution of the participating governments. A board appointed by the participating governments governs each authority. Transit authorities may set fares and other charges and issue bonds. In addition, the governments served by a transit authority may, with voter approval, levy *ad valorem* taxes for the benefit of the authority. The Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (serving Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties), the Transit Authority of River City (serving the Louisville area), and the Fulton City-Fulton County Transit Authority were established under this law.

Transit authorities serving only one county or city are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Urban Service Districts

A general law of 1960 provides for the establishment of these districts by the fiscal court, after petition of the voters, for any of the following purposes: police and fire protection; construction and maintenance of streets, alleys,

and walks; library services; garbage and trash collection and disposal; street lighting and cleaning; parks and playgrounds; and sewer, drainage, and sewage treatment services and facilities. A council, elected by the voters, governs each district. The district may fix and collect fees for services and may levy assessments.

Water Districts

After a finding of need by the Public Service Commission of Kentucky, districts for acquiring, maintaining, and operating water facilities and sewage disposal systems are established by the fiscal court after petition of landowners and public hearing. The county judge/executive appoints a board of commissioners for each district. The district board may issue bonds, levy benefit assessments, and fix and collect fees. These districts also may acquire and operate gas distribution systems if the primary supply is within the district or county except in counties with cities of the first class. The districts may establish fire protection districts coterminous with the establishing district and administered by the water district board. For fire protection districts governed by a separate board, see “Fire Protection Districts,” above.

West Fork Drakes Creek Dam and Reservoir Interstate Authority

This authority was created by a 1990 special act to build a dam across the west fork of Drakes Creek. A board of nine directors consisting of appointed representatives of participating local governments in Kentucky and Tennessee governs the authority. The authority may fix rentals and fees and issue revenue bonds. This authority was not reported in operation as of June 2002.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Kentucky 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 separate governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see “Public School Systems,” above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Joint sewer agencies (county or municipal). These agencies to provide sewer and drainage facilities are established jointly by the governing body of a second-class city and the governing body of the county within which the city is located. An administrative board selected by the city and county governing bodies governs the agency. Agency revenues are from rates, rentals, and charges fixed by the city and county governing bodies acting jointly. Bond issues require the approval of the city and county governing bodies.

Kentucky Housing Corporation (state). This agency was created to provide mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income housing. The corporation is governed by a 14-member board of directors consisting of eight members appointed by the Governor, plus the Lieutenant Governor, the secretary of finance and administration, the commissioner for local government, the secretary of the revenue cabinet, the attorney general, and the secretary of the cabinet for economic development. The corporation may fix and collect fees in connection with its loans and issue revenue bonds.

Municipal housing authorities (municipal). Each of these authorities is created by the city governing body. The authority board consists of the mayor of the city plus members appointed by the mayor with the approval of the city governing body. The sponsoring city government may issue bonds for housing projects payable solely from housing authority income. The authority may charge rentals for use of facilities and accept financial and other aid from the federal and municipal governments and other public agencies (see “Special District Governments,” above, for county, city-county, and regional housing authorities).

Nonprofit corporations financing public facilities (county, municipal, or school district). A number of nonprofit corporations have been established in Kentucky to finance public facilities. Such corporations are governed by officials selected by the county, municipal, or school district government creating the corporation. These corporations may collect rentals from the government served and may issue revenue bonds.

State Properties and Building Commission (state). This commission was created by act of the legislature. It consists of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the attorney general, the secretary of the cabinet for economic development, the secretary of the finance and administration cabinet, and the secretary of the revenue cabinet. The commission may charge rentals for its facilities and issue revenue bonds.

Turnpike projects (state). The state department of transportation may construct and maintain turnpike projects, issue revenue bonds to finance the projects, and collect tolls for their use. In 1960, the Kentucky Turnpike Authority was created as a state agency to provide an alternate method for the construction and financing of turnpike projects. The authority board consists of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the secretary of transportation, the state highway engineer, the secretary of finance and administration, the secretary of commerce, and the attorney general. The authority may collect tolls and rentals for its facilities and issue bonds.

Urban renewal and community development agencies and local development authorities (municipal or county). These agencies and authorities may be created by resolution of the governing body of a county or municipality. Board members are appointed by the chief executive officer of the city or the county judge/executive with the approval of the city or county governing body. These agencies and authorities may issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

State¹

Agriculture Water Quality Authority
Appalachian/Kentucky Artisans Gateway Center Authority
Area development districts
Bluegrass State Skills Corporation
Capital Plaza Authority
Central State Hospital Recovery Authority
Churchill Downs Authority
Covered wooden bridge authorities
Early Childhood Development Authority
East Kentucky Corporation
Eastern Kentucky Exposition Center Corporation
Enterprise Zone Authority of Kentucky
Governmental Services Center Authority
Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation
Kentucky Agriculture Resources Development Authority
Kentucky Asset/Liability Commission
Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation
Kentucky Authority for Educational Television
Kentucky Center for the Arts Corporation
Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority
(formerly the Kentucky Rural Economic Development Authority)
Kentucky Economic Development Partnership (formerly the Kentucky Development Finance Authority)
Kentucky Educational Savings Plan Trust
Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance Authority
Kentucky Grain Insurance Corporation
Kentucky Health and Geriatric Authority
Kentucky Health Care Improvement Authority
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation
Kentucky Horse Park Commission
Kentucky Infrastructure Authority (formerly Kentucky Pollution Abatement and Water Resources Authority)
Kentucky Local Correctional Facilities Construction Authority
Kentucky Lottery Corporation
Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission
Kentucky Recycling Brokerage Authority
Kentucky River Authority

¹The East Kentucky Corporation and the West Kentucky Corporation, previously classified as special districts, were reclassified as state dependents for the 2002 Census of Governments.

Kentucky Savings Bond Authority
Kentucky School Facilities Construction Commission
(formerly Kentucky School Building Authority)
Kentucky Tobacco Settlement Trust Corporation
Kentucky Traumatic Brain Injury Trust Fund Board
Kentucky Wood Products Competitiveness Corporation
Mining and Minerals Trust Fund
Northern Kentucky Convention Center Corporation
West Kentucky Corporation

County²

Air boards or airport authorities (county)
Air pollution control districts
Community improvement districts (in counties containing cities of the first, second, third, or fourth class)
Cooperative extension service districts (sometimes called "extension districts")
Buildings commissions
County health boards
District health boards
Drainage corporations
Independent district health departments
Industrial development authorities
Mental health and mental retardation taxing districts
Neighborhood improvement districts
Public health taxing districts
Public libraries (single county)
Regional jail authorities
Sanitation districts
Surface water drainage districts
Tourism and convention commissions (county)
Transit authorities (single county)
Zoning and planning commissions

Municipal

Air boards or airport authorities (city)
Bridge commissions
Industrial development authorities
Joint park and recreation boards (joint city)
Louisville Water Company
Management districts (cities of the first class and urban counties)
Management districts (cities of the second through sixth class)
Mental health and mental retardation taxing districts
Motor vehicle parking authorities (single city and urban county)
Overlay districts
Public libraries (cities of the first class)
Public libraries (cities of the second through sixth class)
Service districts in urban counties

²Authorizing legislation for neighborhood improvement districts was repealed in 1986, but existing districts of this type may continue in operation.

Tourism and convention commissions (municipal)
Transit authorities (single city)
Zoning and planning commissions

Joint City-County

Air boards or airport authorities (joint city-county)
Area planning commissions
City-county health departments
Industrial development authorities
Interlocal Cooperation Act—separate administrative entities created under

Joint park and recreation boards (joint city-county)
Louisville-Jefferson County Board of Health
Louisville-Jefferson County Regional Airport Authority
(formerly Louisville- Jefferson County Air Board)
Mental health and mental retardation taxing districts
Motor vehicle parking authorities (joint county-city)
Tourism and convention commissions (joint county-city)
Zoning and planning commissions

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