

Missouri

Missouri ranks 8th among the states in number of local governments, with 3,416 as of June 1997.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (114)

The entire area of the state is encompassed by county government with the exception of the city of St. Louis, which is an independent city outside the area of any county, and is counted for census purposes as a municipal rather than a county government. St. Louis County is a county government, but excludes the area of the city of St. Louis.

The county governing body is called the county commission except in St. Louis County, where the charter adopted in 1968 provides for an elected county supervisor and county council, and in Jackson County, where the charter effective January 1, 1973, provides for an elected county executive and county legislature.¹ Counties are generally divided into four classes on the basis of their total assessed valuation, as follows:

- Classification 1—\$450,000,000 or more
- Classification 2—\$300,000,000 to \$449,999,999
- Classification 3—less than \$300,000,000, except for 5 Classification 4 counties
- Classification 4—counties that had attained Classification 2 prior to August 13, 1988, and would otherwise revert to Classification 3 because of changes in assessed valuation

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (1,268)

The 1,268 subcounty general purpose governments in Missouri comprise the 944 municipal (city, town, and village) governments, and the 324 township governments.

Municipal Governments (944)

Municipal governments in Missouri are the cities, towns, and villages. Cities having 10,000 inhabitants or more, as well as cities having legislative charters granted prior to 1875, may adopt charters for their own government and become “constitutional charter” cities. Currently, 29 cities have done so. In addition, prior to the adoption of the Constitution of 1875, several special legislative charters

¹Although the state Constitution refers to the county governing body as the “county court,” the statutes indicate specifically that the term “county court” refers to the county commission.

were enacted; currently, six cities still operate under such charters. The other cities and towns in Missouri are divided into the following classes, based on their population at the time of incorporation:²

- Third class—3,000 or more inhabitants
- Fourth class—500 to 2,999 inhabitants

Towns created by special law and having fewer than 500 inhabitants and villages having more than 200 inhabitants may become cities of the fourth class.

Villages are incorporated places with no minimum population. Municipal governments maintain their existing city classification or their status as a town or village unless they elect to become a city of the class to which their population entitles them. Cities, towns, and villages in Missouri exist within township areas (see “Township Governments,” below), except for the city of St. Louis.³

Township Governments (324)

Counties of the third and fourth classes in Missouri may have township governments. Township governments exist in 23 of the 114 Missouri counties. Townships in the other 91 Missouri counties are geographical areas only, and are not counted as governments. Within the 23 counties with township governments, the entire area of such counties is encompassed by township governments.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (537)

School District Governments (537)

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

- Districts operating elementary and secondary schools:
 - Seven-director school districts
 - Urban school districts
 - Metropolitan school districts
 - Junior college districts
 - Special school districts for handicapped children

²Former provisions concerning first and second class cities were repealed in 1975. At present, classified cities are divided into third and fourth classes only.

³The city of Lamar is coterminous with city township in Lamar County. However, the city and the township each perform distinct functions, and are each counted as separate governments for census purposes.

An elected board of directors governs each six director, urban, or metropolitan school district. These districts may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds. Junior college districts, as authorized by 1961 legislation, are also counted as governments. Such a district is established on petition of voters or of a school district operating a college, after referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each junior college district. Junior college districts may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds.

Legislation also provides that special school districts for handicapped children may be established by petition to the state board of education after referendum. Vocational training may also be provided by these special schools. Such a district, administered by an elected board, is counted as a school district government for census reporting.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Missouri has no dependent public school systems.

Other Educational Activities

School districts that operate an accredited high school may also operate a junior college.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (1,497)

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

Ambulance Districts

Districts to provide ambulance service in rural areas may be established by the county commission on petition of voters and after public hearing and local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may impose charges, levy ad valorem taxes, and issue bonds.

Bi-State Metropolitan Development District

This district was authorized by a compact between Illinois and Missouri to plan, construct, and operate passenger transportation facilities, bridges, tunnels, industrial parks, airports, and terminal facilities and to plan and establish policies for sewage and drainage facilities and coordination of streets and highways, recreation facilities, parking facilities, etc., in municipalities served. The governing body is a board of commissioners (five commissioners appointed by the Governor of each state). The district may issue bonds, fix and collect fees for use of facilities, and receive contributions from any political subdivision or the federal government. This district operates the Bi-State Transit System in the St. Louis area, and the Bi-State Parks Airport in Illinois.

County Airport Authorities

Authorities to provide airports are established by resolution of the county governing body. An elected board of directors governs each authority. The authority may fix fees and rents for its services, may issue revenue bonds, and may levy ad valorem taxes upon voter approval.

County Joint Recreational Lake Authority

This authority to construct, operate, and maintain recreational lakes and related facilities in Cape Girardeau and Bollinger Counties was established by a 1990 special act. An elected board governs the authority. The authority may charge fees and rents, receive state and local appropriations, use tax increment financing, issue revenue bonds, and, after voter approval, may levy a sales tax.

County Land Trusts

This trust to administer and sell tax delinquent lands in St. Louis city and St. Louis County was created by an act of the legislature. A board of three trustees governs the trust, of whom one each represents St. Louis County, St. Louis city, and the largest school district in the St. Louis area. The trust may receive revenue from land rentals, leases, and sales.

County Library Districts

Districts of this type are now listed below under “Library Districts.”

Drainage Districts

Missouri statutes authorize the following types of drainage districts:

Drainage districts. Drainage districts are created by the circuit court on petition of landowners. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The district may levy taxes based on benefits and issue bonds. Drainage districts administered by the county court, however, are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Mine drainage districts. The circuit court, on petition of landowners, may create districts to drain lands for mining. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The district may impose special taxes based on minerals produced or processed and may issue bonds.

Sanitary drainage districts. The provisions of this law apply to cities having 300,000 inhabitants or more and to counties adjoining such cities. The districts are established by the circuit court on petition of the mayor and the legislative body of the city and/or the county commission, after referendum. A board of trustees governs each district; the county commission, the circuit court, and the

mayor each appoint one trustee. The district board fixes the amount of special drainage taxes to be collected and may issue bonds upon approval of the county commission.

Economic Development Districts

Districts to encourage economic development may be established by agreement of the governing bodies of adjacent counties (including cities not within a county). The district board consists of representatives of each participating government, as specified in the agreement creating the district. The district may receive revenue from rentals and service charges.

Fire Protection Districts

These districts are established by the circuit court on petition of voters and after public hearing and local referendum. They also provide ambulance service with voter approval. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may levy property taxes and issue bonds with voter approval.

Greater Kansas City Port District and Authority

This authority is described under “Kansas—Special District Governments.”

Hospital Districts

These districts are established in counties of under 400,000 inhabitants by the county commission on petition of voters and after public hearing and local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may fix, charge, and collect fees, levy ad valorem taxes, and issue bonds with the approval of the voters.

Housing Authorities

Housing authorities may be created by resolution of municipal or county governing bodies. A board of commissioners, appointed by the mayor or the county commission, governs each authority. Housing authorities may issue bonds, collect rentals for the use of their facilities, and accept federal grants.

Interstate Bridge Commissions

Laws authorizing interstate bridge commissions were repealed in 1995.

Jackson County Sports Complex Authority

This authority was authorized under a 1965 law. A board of five commissioners appointed by the governor, with the consent of the Senate from a panel of names submitted by the county commission, governs the authority. The authority may collect fees and grants, receive contributions and appropriations, and issue bonds.

Joint Municipal Utility Commissions

These commissions are created by contract between municipal governments to develop and operate public utilities. The governing body is a board of directors whose composition is determined by the contract. The district may fix charges, and issue revenue bonds after approval by referendum in each contracting municipality.

Kansas City Area Transportation Authority

This authority was authorized by interstate compact between Kansas and Missouri to provide transit service in the Kansas City area. A board of commissioners—five from each state—administers the authority. The authority may collect fares and other charges, accept appropriations and grants, and issue revenue bonds. In addition, a temporary city sales tax has been authorized for public transportation purposes.

Levee Districts

Missouri statutes provide two alternative methods of establishing levee districts: by petition to the circuit court; or by resolution of the county commission. A board of five elected supervisors governs each district established by the circuit court. A board of directors appointed by the county commission governs each district established by the county commission. Both types of levee districts may issue bonds and may levy benefit assessments.

Library Districts

Missouri statutes provide for the following types of library districts:

- City-county libraries
- County library districts
- Municipal library districts
- Urban public library districts

City-county libraries are established by petition of a city library to the county governing body. The petitioning city library must meet specified population and tax rate requirements. County library districts are created by the county commission on petition of taxpayers after local referendum. Municipal library districts are established by petition of voters to the city governing body, after voter approval. Urban public library districts are established by resolution of a nine-member school district board, after voter approval. When two or more library districts join to form a consolidated library, the consolidated library is counted as one government. A board appointed by the governing bodies of the cities or counties served governs each of these types of library districts. These districts may levy ad valorem taxes with voter approval, accept state and federal contributions, and issue bonds.

Metropolitan Zoo District (Springfield)

This district was not reported in operation as of 2002.

Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District

This district, authorized by general law applicable to St. Louis city and St. Louis County, is established by elected officials of the two governments upon petition of voters and following referendum. A board of eight commissioners, four of whom are appointed by the mayor of St. Louis city and four are appointed by the chief executive officer of St. Louis County, governs the district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds. The district is divided into subdistricts that are classified as adjuncts of the parent district for census reporting, and are not counted as separate governments.

Missouri and Kansas Metropolitan Culture and Recreation District

This district to provide cultural and recreational facilities is established by ratification of a compact by Missouri and Kansas and after petition by voters or resolution of the governing body of the county or counties to be served. A board of commissioners appointed by the counties to be served governs the district. The district may impose fees and rents, issue revenue bonds, and, after voter approval, may levy sales taxes.

Missouri-Kansas Development District and Agency

This district is described under “Kansas—Special District Governments.”

Nursing Home Districts

These districts are established in counties of 400,000 or fewer inhabitants by the county commission on petition of voters, followed by a public hearing and local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may fix charges for services, levy ad valorem taxes, and, with the approval of the voters, issue bonds.

Port Authorities

Regional port authorities serving two or more counties or cities are formed by application of participating counties or cities to the state Highways and Transportation Commission. A board of directors governs each port authority; the number of directors and the method of selecting them is specified in the agreement among participating counties or cities. An authority may accept grants and issue bonds.

Authorities serving a single county or city are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Regional Convention and Visitors Commission

This commission to promote conventions and tourism in St. Louis city and St. Louis County was established by a 1984 special act. The commission is appointed by the

governing bodies of St. Louis city and St. Louis County. The commission may collect fees and charges for its services and, after voter approval, may levy a hotel/motel sales tax.

Regional Cultural and Performing Arts Development District

This district to encourage cultural institutions in St. Louis city and St. Louis County was established by a 1984 special act. A board of commissioners appointed by the governing bodies of St. Louis city and St. Louis County governs the district. The district may, after voter approval, levy a hotel-motel sales tax.

Road Districts

Missouri statutes authorize the following types of road districts:

Benefit assessment special road districts. There are two laws in Missouri (one applicable to counties with township organization, the other to counties not having township organization) authorizing this type of road district. Both laws provide for creation of these districts by the county commission on petition. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The district may levy special benefit assessments and issue bonds with the approval of the voters. Districts located in counties without township governments receive a portion of the county road and bridge tax.

Special road districts. These districts may be created by the county commission after referendum. Counties having organized township governments and most class 1 counties are excluded from the provisions of this law. The district must have a city, town, or village of less than 100,000 population within its area. A board of commissioners, appointed by the mayor and city council and the county commission, governs each district. The county and the municipalities within the districts are required to give the districts a portion of fees collected for certain business licenses, as well as a portion of the county road and bridge tax. The district may issue bonds with voter approval.

Special road subdistricts. Subdistricts of this type are established by county ordinance, after petition of landowners and a public hearing. A board of commissioners, initially appointed by the county commission, but thereafter elected, governs each subdistrict. The subdistricts may, upon voter approval, levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds.

St. Charles County Convention and Sports Facility Authority

This authority to provide convention, visitor, and sports facilities in St. Charles County is established pursuant to special act by order of the county governing body. A

board of commissioners appointed by the Governor governs the authority. The authority may impose fees and rents, receive federal, state, and local contributions, impose a tax on sleeping rooms of hotels or motels upon voter approval, and issue revenue bonds.

St. Louis Regional Convention Center and Sports Complex Authority

This authority was authorized by act of the legislature to provide convention centers, stadiums, field houses, and related facilities. A board of commissioners, consisting of up to three appointed by the mayor of St. Louis, up to three appointed by the chief executive of St. Louis County, and up to five appointed by the Governor, governs the authority. The authority may impose fees and rates, receive state and local appropriations (including the proceeds of county and city hotel-motel taxes), and issue bonds.

Sewer Districts

A 1961 law provides that sewer districts may be established in Class 2 counties by the circuit court on petition of landowners and after public hearing. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes, fix rates and charges, levy special assessments, and issue bonds with the approval of the voters.

In addition, sewer districts may be established in counties having a population of 700,000 to 1,000,000 (St. Louis County) by the circuit court upon petition of resident landowners and hearing. An elected board of three trustees governs each district. The district may fix the amount of sewer taxes and issue bonds with voter approval.

The Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District operates under an authorization in the Missouri constitution that authorizes the establishment of metropolitan districts in St. Louis city and St. Louis County to provide services common to the area after approval of the voters. Creation of this district, which provides sewer services, received voter approval in 1954. A board of trustees consisting of three members appointed by the mayor and three by the county supervisor with the approval of a majority of the judges of the circuit courts of the city and the county, respectively, governs the district. The district may levy property taxes and special benefit assessments, and fix rates and charges for services. Bond issues must be approved by the voters.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

These districts are established by the state soil and water districts commission on petition of landowners and after public hearing and local referendum. A board of four elected supervisors, plus the county agricultural extension agent ex officio, administers each district. The district may receive appropriations and gifts, grants, and contributions.

Watershed districts to provide watershed protection and flood control may be established on petition to the supervisors of a soil conservation district, after hearing and referendum. An elected board of trustees governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes, collect special assessments, and issue bonds.

Street Light Maintenance Districts

These districts may be created in Class 1 counties by the county commission on petition of taxpayers and after public hearing and local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes.

Tourism Community Enhancement Districts

Tourism community enhancement districts are created by the clerk of the county, city, town, or village on petition of the voters and after a hearing. The district is governed by a board of at least five directors. Two are selected by the largest convention and visitor's bureau, and the governing body with the largest population, the governing body with the second largest population, and the destination marketing organization with the second largest population, each select one member. The district may impose charges on private tourist attractions and hotels, motels, or campgrounds and may levy a retail sales tax upon voter approval.

Transportation Development Districts

Districts to develop highway, water, air, railroad, and transit facilities are established by petition of voters or resolution of the governing body of a local transportation-related agency, after voter approval. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may levy special assessments, ad valorem taxes, retail sales taxes, and tolls and fees after voter approval, and may issue bonds.

Water Conservancy Districts

These districts may be created by the circuit court in any city with less than 450,000 inhabitants and any county not containing such a city, after petition and referendum. A board of trustees, with six members elected and two appointed by the governor, governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds.

Water Supply Districts

Metropolitan water supply districts or public water supply districts are created by the circuit court on petition of taxpayers after hearing and local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may issue bonds, fix rates and charges for services, and determine the amount of ad valorem taxes to be levied.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Missouri 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.

Health and Education Facilities Authority (state).

This authority was established by act of the general assembly to finance the construction of buildings for health and higher educational institutions. A board of seven members appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate governs the authority. The authority may lease facilities to participating institutions, fix rates, rents, fees, and charges, make mortgage loans, and issue revenue bonds.

Higher Education Loan Authority (state). This authority was established by act of the general assembly to finance student loans. A board of seven members, five of whom are appointed by the Governor, plus a member of the coordinating board for higher education and the state commissioner of higher education, ex officio, governs the authority. The authority may fix fees and charges in connection with its loans and may issue revenue bonds.

Land clearance for redevelopment authorities (municipal and county). These authorities are established by resolution of the municipal or county governing body. A board of commissioners appointed by the mayor (in the case of municipal authorities) or the county governing body (in the case of county authorities) governs each authority. An authority may accept advances, loans, grants, and other financial assistance from any public or private source and may issue revenue bonds. Regional authorities may be created by two or more municipal and/or county governments.

Missouri Housing Development Commission

(state). This commission was established by act of the general assembly to provide mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income housing. The commission consists of nine members, six of whom are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate, plus the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the state treasurer, and the attorney general, who serve in an ex officio capacity. The commission may fix fees and charges, receive appropriations and grants, make mortgage loans, and issue revenue bonds.

Other examples include:

State

Area revitalization authorities
Forest cropland districts
Missouri Access to Higher Education Trust

Missouri Agricultural Small Business Development Authority
Missouri Board of Public Buildings
Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education
Missouri Development Finance Board (formerly Missouri Economic Development, Export, and Infrastructure Board)
Missouri Family Trust
Missouri Public Entity Risk Management Fund
State Environmental Improvement and Energy Resources Authority (formerly Environmental Improvement Authority)
Tobacco Settlement Financing Authority

County

Common road districts (county)
Common sewer districts
County health centers
Drainage districts under county court
Homeless assistance programs (Jackson, St. Charles, and St. Louis Counties)
Industrial development corporations and authorities
Neighborhood improvement districts (county)
Port authorities (single county)
Regional taxicab districts (St. Louis)
Senior citizens' services boards
Sewer districts in counties having 500,000 to 700,000 population (Jackson County)
Sheltered workshop boards
Solid waste management districts

Municipal

Business districts
Community improvement district
Homeless assistance program (St. Louis city)
Industrial development corporations and authorities
Kansas City Public Building Authority
Land reutilization authorities (St. Louis city)
Municipal Redevelopment Authority
Neighborhood improvement districts (municipal)
Planned industrial expansion authorities—cities over 400,000 population
Port authorities (single-city)
Sheltered workshop boards (St. Louis city)
Tax increment financing commissions

Township

Common road districts (township)

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