

## **OKLAHOMA**

Oklahoma ranks 18th among the states in number of local governments, with 1,880 active in October 2007.

### **COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (77)**

There are no areas in Oklahoma lacking county government. The county governing body is called the board of county commissioners.

### **SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (594)**

#### **Municipal Governments (594)**

Municipal governments in Oklahoma are the cities (incorporated places with more than 1,000 inhabitants) and towns (incorporated places with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants). This classification is not automatic; a referendum is required for a municipality to change class. Unincorporated communities are called villages and are not counted as governments.

#### **Township Governments (0)**

Oklahoma has no township governments.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (567)**

#### **School District Governments (567)**

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

- "Independent" school districts
- Elementary school districts
- Technology center school districts
- Community junior college districts

"Independent" school districts are supervised and administered by elected boards of education. Elementary school districts, formerly called "dependent" school districts, are administered by elected boards of education but

are under the supervision of the county superintendent of schools and offer elementary grades only. Both "independent" and elementary school districts may levy local school taxes and issue bonds.

Technology center school districts are also administered by elected boards of education and have financing powers similar to the school districts above. These entities were formerly known as area vocational-technical school districts.

Community junior college districts in Oklahoma are governed by elected boards of trustees. These districts may levy local school taxes and issue bonds. Upon approval by the board of trustees, these districts may choose to become technology center school districts.

#### **Dependent Public School Systems (0)**

Oklahoma has no dependent public school systems as defined for census reporting.

#### **Other Educational Activities**

Boards of education may provide junior college classes as an extension of school district services.

Regional education service centers are administered by the state department of education. These centers provide screening and evaluation services for students that may be in need of special educational services.

Interlocal cooperatives are established by agreement between two or more school districts to facilitate shared services including special education.

College technology center school districts may be established by resolution of junior college district boards of regents. The laws applicable to area vocational technical school district funding also apply to the college area vocational technical school districts. They are governed by the board of the junior college district, ex officio,

and are not counted as separate governments.

## **SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (642)**

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

### **Conservancy Districts**

Conservancy districts and master conservancy districts provide flood control, irrigation, and water supply. Both types may be established by the district court on petition of landowners and after public hearing. A board of directors appointed by the judge of the district court administers each district. In some cases, the directors are appointed by the governing bodies of the member governments. The board may levy benefit assessments, collect rates and charges, and issue bonds with voter approval. Conservancy districts that are administered by the state are not counted for census purposes.

Subdistricts of a conservancy district are classified as dependent agencies of the conservancy district and are not counted as separate governments.

### **Conservation Districts**

Conservation districts, formerly known as soil and water conservation districts, are formed by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Each district is governed by a board of directors consisting of three elected directors and two directors appointed by the state commission. The districts may require contributions from benefitted landowners and accept state and county funds.

### **Emergency Medical Service Districts**

Districts to provide emergency medical services are created by petition to or resolution of the governing bodies of one or more counties, cities, or towns, after voter approval. A board of trustees, appointed by the participating

governments, governs each district. The districts may fix fees, and, after voter approval, may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds.

### **Enterprise District Management Authorities**

Authorities to finance business development in blighted areas are created by resolution of the governing bodies of contiguous county, city, or town governments in state-designated enterprise zones. A board consisting of members appointed by the member governments governs each authority. The authority may fix charges in connection with its loans. Bonds may be issued by the member governments after voter approval.

### **Fire Protection Districts**

These districts may be established by the board of county commissioners on petition of landowners and after hearing and referendum. An elected board of directors governs each fire protection district. The district may issue bonds upon voter approval and may levy annual assessments.

### **Housing Authorities**

A housing authority may be established by resolution of the governing body of a city, town, or county on its own motion or upon petition of voters to the governing body. In either case, a referendum is required, except in cities and counties with a population of 200,000 or more. A board of commissioners appointed by the mayor with the consent of the city or town governing body (in the case of a city or town housing authority) or by the board of county commissioners (in the case of a county housing authority) governs each authority. One board member selected must be a tenant from a housing project. An authority may charge rentals and issue revenue bonds.

Rural electric cooperative housing authorities are governed under provisions similar to those above. Commissioners of such authorities are appointed by the chief executive officer of the rural electric cooperative served.

Indian housing authorities also are governed under provisions similar to those above. These authorities may be created by resolution of an Indian tribe. The chief or other tribal governing head appoints the board of commissioners.

### **Irrigation Districts**

Irrigation districts may be established by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board on petition of the landowners and after referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may levy both annual ad valorem taxes and special assessments, fix tolls and charges, and issue bonds.

### **Port Authorities**

These authorities may be established by one or more county or municipal governments or any combination thereof by ordinance or resolution. A board appointed by the governing bodies of the establishing governments governs each authority. The authority may fix rentals and charges for the use of facilities and issue revenue bonds. The City of Tulsa-Rogers County Port Authority (Port of Catoosa) was established under this law.

### **Public Library Systems**

Oklahoma statutes authorize multicounty library systems and rural single county library systems. A library system may be created by resolution or ordinance of the board or boards of county commissioners, by the governing bodies of all cities or towns with a population of 2,000 or more, or by the county seat if no city or town in the county has a population of at least 2,000. All systems must be approved by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Board. The systems may receive the proceeds of special tax levies upon voter approval. The systems may fix and collect fees. The systems receive appropriations from city, town, and county general funds, state and federal grants-in-aid, and other public and private funds.

### **Regional Water Distribution Districts**

Regional water distribution districts are created by two or more counties through interlocal agreement. A board of directors governs the district; its composition is specified in the interlocal agreement. The board may fix fees and charges and issue bonds with the approval of the state's attorney general.

### **Rural Road Improvement Districts**

These districts are established upon petition of landowners followed by a public hearing and referendum for the purpose of road improvement. A board of nine directors elected by the property owners governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem property taxes and, with voter approval, issue general obligation bonds.

### **Rural Water, Sewer, Gas, and Solid Waste Management Districts**

These districts are created by the county commissioners on petition of landowners and after public hearing. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may collect rates and fees, as well as charges based on benefits received, and may issue revenue bonds.

If a district of this type is located entirely within a city with 10,000 or fewer inhabitants, it is administered by the municipal governing body and is not counted as a separate government (see "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below).

### **Sewer Improvement Districts**

These districts are created by the board of county commissioners on petition of landowners and after a hearing and referendum. A board of directors appointed by the county commissioners governs each district. The districts may issue bonds upon voter approval, levy special assessments, and fix tolls and charges.

## SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Oklahoma 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).

**Grand River Dam Authority (state).** This authority was established by special act. Its seven-member board of directors is appointed by the Governor from a list of nominees supplied by the board of directors nominating committee with the consent of the senate. The authority may collect charges for the sale of water and electricity and may issue revenue bonds.

**Oklahoma Capitol Improvement Authority (state).** This authority was established by special act. The authority board consists of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the state treasurer, the director of public affairs, the director of human services, the director of central services, the vice chairperson of the state tax commission, and the director of the department of tourism and recreation. The authority may issue bonds and collect rentals.

**Oklahoma Industrial Finance Authority (state).** This authority was created by a special act after referendum. The authority board of directors consists of the director of the state department of commerce, plus six members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate. The authority receives revenue from state appropriations, rentals for projects, and interest from loans, and may issue revenue bonds.

**Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (state).** This authority was established by act of the legislature. The authority board consists of one member from each congressional district in the state who is appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the Governor as an

ex officio member. The authority may issue revenue bonds and collect tolls. The authority was formerly known as the Oklahoma Transportation Authority.

**Trusts (state, county, or municipal).** Trusts are established by a legal instrument or will upon approval of the Governor (if the state is the beneficiary government) or upon approval of the governing body of a county or municipal government (if a county or a municipality is the beneficiary government). In most cases, a single government is beneficiary of a particular trust, but a few trusts have two or more beneficiary governments.

Trusts are known by a wide variety of names.<sup>1</sup> The functions to be performed by such agencies and the powers granted to such agencies are spelled out in the legal instrument or will creating the trust. Trusts may receive contributions from participating governments and, if the legal instrument or will so provides, fix charges and issue revenue bonds.

**Urban renewal authorities (municipal).** An urban renewal authority may be established by resolution of the governing body in municipalities with a population more than 10,000. For municipalities with a population of fewer than 10,000, voter approval is also needed. Each authority is governed by a board of directors consisting of five members appointed by the mayor subject to the approval of the municipal governing body. The authorities may issue revenue bonds. Present law authorizing urban renewal authorities supersedes three separate prior laws.

Other examples include:

### State

Boll Weevil Eradication Organization  
Capitol-Medical Center Improvement and Zoning District  
Community Hospitals Authority  
Conservancy districts administered by the state  
Greenwood Area Redevelopment Authority  
Mining districts

Native American Cultural and Educational Authority  
Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology  
Oklahoma Conservation Commission  
Oklahoma Educational Television Authority  
Oklahoma Health Care Authority  
Oklahoma Institute of Technology  
Oklahoma Rural Medical Education Loan and Scholarship Fund  
Oklahoma Science and Technology Research and Development Board  
Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority  
Oklahoma State University Medical Authority  
Oklahoma Student Loan Authority  
Oklahoma Water Resources Board  
Ottawa Reclamation Authority  
Quartz Mountain Arts and Conference Center  
University Hospitals Authority  
Water Conservation Storage Commission  
Water districts (state)

## **County**

County cemetery associations  
County free fair associations (established under 1915, 1937, and 1947 laws)

Health districts (these districts serve two or more counties)  
Joint airport boards  
Rural ambulance service districts

## **Municipal**

City and town water districts  
Improvement districts  
Joint airport boards  
Municipal parking station improvement districts  
Rural water, sewer, gas, and solid waste management districts governed by the city governing body  
Sewer districts

## **Joint County-Municipal**

City-county library commissions  
Metropolitan library commissions

Oklahoma laws also provide for various types of local areas for election purposes and administration of justice. Regional economic development districts are administrative areas for bond-issuing purposes.

1. Examples of large state agencies formed as public trusts include the Medical Technology and Research Authority of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Development Finance Authority (formerly Oklahoma Development Authority), Oklahoma Environmental Protection Authority, the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency, Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority, Oklahoma Ordnance Works Authority, the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Commission, Southern Oklahoma Memorial Hospital Authority, and Southeastern Oklahoma Industries Authority. Examples of large county agencies formed as public trusts include the Canadian County Home Finance Authority, Cleveland County Home Finance Authority, Oklahoma County Home Finance Authority, Oklahoma Industries Authority, the Tulsa County Home Finance Authority, and jail trust authorities. Examples of large municipal agencies formed as public trusts include the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority, Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority, Oklahoma City Airport Trust, Oklahoma City Municipal Improvement Authority, Oklahoma Psychiatric Foundation Authority, Tulsa Industrial Authority, Tulsa Municipal Airport Trust, Long-Term Care Management Authority of Tulsa, University Center at Tulsa Authority, Regional Metropolitan Utility Authority (Tulsa), Tulsa Port of Catoosa Facilities Authority, and Tulsa Public Facilities Authority. Classification for census purposes of a particular trust as a state, county, or municipal agency is determined by

identifying the government that is the beneficiary of that trust.  
Trusts from Tulsa city ordinances (under title 39).