

# Michigan

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Michigan ranks 13th among the states in number of local governments, with 2,805 as of June 2002.

## **COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (83)**

There are no areas in Michigan lacking county government. The county governing body is called the board of county commissioners. Most counties operate in accordance with general statutes, although they may also organize under a locally approved charter. To date, only Wayne County has its own home rule charter.

## **SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (1,775)**

The 1,775 subcounty general purpose governments in Michigan comprise of 533 municipal (city and village) governments, and 1,242 township governments.

### **Municipal Governments (533)**

The term "municipality," as defined for census statistics on governments, applies only to the cities and villages in Michigan. Townships, to which the term "municipality" is applied by some Michigan statutes, are classified for census purposes as township rather than municipal governments (see below).

Cities are organized as home-rule, special charter, or fourth class. Those fourth class cities that do not adopt a home-rule charter are under the Fourth Class City Act. Villages are either home rule or general law villages. Unlike cities, which exist outside the area of any township, villages are included within township areas.<sup>1</sup>

### **Township Governments (1,242)**

Township governments encompass the entire state except for areas within the boundaries of cities. Townships of 2,000 or more inhabitants may organize as "charter" townships and exercise considerably broader taxing powers and more administrative flexibility than other township governments.

<sup>1</sup>One village, Grosse Pointe Shores, is coterminous with two townships (Lake Township in Macomb County and Grosse Pointe Township in Wayne County). However, the village and the townships each perform distinct functions and are each counted as separate governments for census purposes.

Townships are governed by a township board consisting of the township supervisor, the township clerk, the township treasurer, and two or four elected trustees.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (739)**

### **School District Governments (580)**

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

- General powers school district
- Local act school districts
- Community college districts

The governing body of a general powers school district is an elected board of education. Revenue is derived from a state wide sales tax. General powers school districts may issue bonds, some of which require voter approval.

Community college districts, each administered by an elected board of trustees, are also counted as governments. Community college district boards are authorized to levy taxes up to limits approved by the voters, accept gifts, grants, and contributions, and issue bonds with the approval of the voters.

### **Dependent Public School Systems (159)**

#### **First class school districts (Detroit)**

The only first class school district operating in the state of Michigan is The Detroit Public School System. In 1997, that system was classified and counted as an independent public school system. However, in 1999, that status changed when the system was reorganized and placed under the control of the mayor of the city of Detroit. The governing board (Detroit's school reform board) is appointed by the mayor of the city of Detroit.

### **Public School Academies (Charter Schools)**

Public school academies are established to provide an alternative means of public education by application of one or more persons to a school district, intermediate school district, community college or state university and approval of the sponsoring body. They are governed by a board of directors whose composition and manner of appointment is specified by the sponsoring agency. The schools are eligible to receive state per pupil funding passed through the sponsoring agency. Public school

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academies are classified as dependent school systems of their sponsoring agencies, and as such may be dependent systems of the state, or of school district or tribal governments.

### **Other Educational Activities**

The intermediate school districts (areas within which intermediate school boards provide services for underlying school districts) are classified for census purposes as joint educational service agencies of the constituent school districts, and are not counted as separate governments. The intermediate school district board is appointed by a board composed of one representative of each constituent school district. Although intermediate school districts may levy ad valorem taxes, their budgets must be approved by the underlying school districts. In addition, the levy of ad valorem taxes for vocational-technical school and special education purposes by intermediate school districts requires voter approval. In June, 2002, 55 intermediate school districts were reported in operation.

The board of education of first class school districts or other school districts having 10,000 population or more may operate community (junior) colleges as an extension of the school services provided by the district. However, nearly all community colleges in Michigan are now operated by independent community college districts.

### **SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (332)**

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

#### **Agencies Formed Under Intergovernmental Agreements—1968 Law**

Two or more governments (county, city, village, township, school district, or special district) may exercise jointly any power common to them. Whenever such an agreement establishes an agency that is separate from the creating governments, the agreement specifies the functions to be performed, the method of selecting members of the agency governing body, and the method of allocating the share of the agency budget to each participating government. Agencies formed under this law may fix charges and borrow money, but may not levy taxes.

#### **Airport Authorities**

A 1970 general law, with special application to Ingham County, provides for the formation of an airport authority by any county having a portion of its boundaries within 10 miles of any state-owned airport and any city exceeding 100,000 population (Lansing) within its boundaries by resolution of each governing body. Contiguous counties may participate on petition of voters and after referendum. The Capital City Airport Authority was established

under this law. An airport board consisting of the director of the Michigan Aeronautics Commission or a designated representative, three members from the city appointed by the mayor with the consent of the council, two members from the county appointed by its governing body, and two members from each additional county joining the authority, appointed by the respective county governing body, governs the authority. The authority board determines its fiscal requirements which are provided by the participating governments. The authority may also impose ad valorem taxes, and may issue revenue bonds.

Joint airport authorities may be created by resolution of the legislative bodies of two or more cities, counties, townships, or incorporated villages or any combination thereof, after referendum. The governing body, an airport board, consists of one member for each 20,000 inhabitants or fraction thereof for the first 100,000 population, plus one additional member for each additional 250,000 inhabitants, appointed by the legislative body of the participating governments. An authority may issue bonds, levy ad valorem taxes after voter approval, and determine its financial requirements, which are provided by the participating governments.

#### **Community Mental Health Authorities**

These authorities manage delivery and oversee community mental health services. They are established through enabling resolution adopted by the board of county commissioners of each creating county, after at least three public hearings have been held. The resolution becomes effective after it has been filed with the secretary of state and the county clerks of each participating county. Authorities are governed by boards which are described in the terms outlined in the legislation creating them. General powers include, but are not limited to, fixing and collecting charges, and accepting grants and gifts. Community mental health boards which represent only one county are not counted as separate governments for census purposes. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

#### **County Water, Sewer, and Sewer and Garbage Disposal Systems**

Any county may, by action of the county board of commissioners, establish a water, sewer, or sewage and garbage disposal system to serve cities, villages, and townships in the county pursuant to contract. The county may designate the agency to administer such a system. The amounts to be contributed by each city, township, or village are determined by contract. The county may also issue revenue bonds, or issue bonds secured by the contracting governments, to finance these systems. When a separate agency is established to administer these systems, that agency is counted as a special district government for census purposes.

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## **District Library Boards**

Two or more county, municipal, township, or school district governments may establish a district library upon approval of each of the participating governments. The composition of the library board is specified in the agreement creating the district library. Each participating government supports the district library through appropriations or tax levies. Tax levies and general obligation bond issues for library purposes require voter approval.

## **Emergency Service Authorities**

Any two or more counties, cities, villages, or townships may incorporate an authority to provide emergency services, including fire protection, ambulance, and police protection, upon approval of the articles of incorporation by the governing body of each participating government. The method of selecting the authority governing body is specified in the articles of incorporation. The authority may levy ad valorem taxes upon voter approval.

## **Grand Rapids Kent County Convention Arena Authority**

The authority was created by a special act of the legislature, and a joint resolution of the city and county to acquire, construct, and operate convention centers, and related facilities. The authority is governed by a board consisting of two members appointed by the city, two appointed by the county, one appointed by the governor, and two appointed by the aforementioned five. The authority may fix fees and charges, and may issue bonds.

## **Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority**

A special act of the Michigan Legislature created this authority for acquiring and developing parks in southeastern Michigan. The authority is governed by a board of commissioners, consisting of five members appointed by the participating county boards of commissioners and two appointed by the Governor. The authority may levy taxes within voter-authorized limits, and collect fees, tolls, and charges.

## **Joint Agencies for Electric Power**

These agencies may be created to generate and distribute electric power by resolution of the legislative bodies of two or more counties, cities, villages, townships, or metropolitan districts. The governing body is a board of commissioners composed of representatives of the participating governments. An agency may set rents, rates, and fees, and accept appropriations from participating governments. An agency also may issue revenue bonds. The Michigan Public Power Agency was established under this law.

## **Joint Hospital Authorities**

Joint hospital authorities are created to provide, operate, and maintain hospitals by resolution of the legislative bodies of two or more cities, villages, or townships with the approval of the voters. The authorities are governed by hospital boards with one member appointed for the first 20,000 inhabitants, one for each additional 40,000 or fraction thereof by the creating legislative bodies, and seven members selected by these appointees. The authorities determine their fiscal needs, which are provided by the participating cities, villages, and townships. In addition, joint hospital authorities may issue bonds.

## **Land Reclamation and Improvement Authorities**

These authorities are created following a petition to the Department of the Treasury and after a public hearing for the purpose of promoting economic growth. An authority is governed by a board of five to seven members elected by real property owners. The authorities may collect fees and charges, determine special assessments and may issue bonds.

## **Mass Transportation Authorities—1963 law**

Any city with a population not exceeding 300,000 may, by action of its governing body, incorporate a mass transportation authority to provide transit service within the city and surrounding areas within a 10-mile radius of the city. The method of selecting the authority governing body members is specified in the articles of incorporation. Mass transportation authorities may fix fares and other charges, and may issue revenue bonds. Similar provisions apply to transportation commissioners formed under intergovernmental agreements.

Authorities governed by the city governing body *ex officio* are not counted as separate governments. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

## **Metropolitan Councils**

Metropolitan councils to provide public improvements and services, including water supply, sewerage, solid waste collection and disposal, parks and recreation, transportation facilities, higher education facilities, and economic development and planning are established by an agreement between two or more local governments. The composition of the metropolitan council governing body is specified in the agreement creating the council. Metropolitan councils may fix charges for their facilities and services, levy ad valorem taxes, and require the participating governments to contribute to the council in proportion to their assessed valuation. If their articles of incorporation so permit, they may also issue bonds.

## **Metropolitan Transportation Authorities—1967 law**

Under general law, metropolitan transportation authorities may be established to provide transit service in major

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metropolitan areas by resolution of the board of commissioners of one or more contiguous counties. A board of directors, consisting of nine members, is appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate; six of the appointments are made from lists submitted by the boards of commissioners of the member counties and the mayor of any city within the authority with a population exceeding 500,000. In the case of the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation, which was established under this law, 15 members are apportioned on the basis of population and appointed by their respective governing bodies.

Metropolitan transportation authorities may fix and collect rates, fares, tolls, and other charges, accept appropriations and grants, and issue revenue bonds. In addition to operating transit service itself, a metropolitan transportation authority may make contracts with other public or private transit systems for construction or operation of any portion of the transit facilities within the area served by the authority.

#### **Port Authorities—1978 law**

Any city and county, combination of counties, or a combination consisting of at least one city and one county may request the Governor to authorize the incorporation of an authority to provide, operate, and maintain port facilities. The governing body of an authority has one member appointed by the Governor and representatives of the participating governments. In a county over 2,000,000 population, one member is appointed by the Governor, two by the county board of commissioners, and two by the mayor of a city having a population of at least 1,000,000. Authorities may set and collect rates, fees, and charges, and may issue revenue bonds. Fifty percent of the authority operating budget is funded by the department of transportation. These provisions replace former provisions that authorized port districts.

#### **Public Transportation Authorities—1986 Law**

Authorities to provide transit service may be created under this law by one or more counties, cities, townships, or villages, or combination thereof. The composition of the authority governing body is specified in the agreement creating the authority. The authorities may fix fares, fees, rents, and charges, and receive appropriations from participating governments. They may also levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds after voter approval, but may not pledge the credit of participating governments without the approval of those governments.

#### **Soil Conservation Districts**

The State Soil Conservation Committee creates these districts on petition and after hearing and referendum. The governing board consists of three directors popularly

elected and two directors appointed by the State Soil Conservation Committee. The districts may require contributions from benefited landholders.

#### **Water and Sanitation Districts and Authorities**

Michigan general laws authorize the following types of districts or authorities to provide for water supply and sanitation:

Charter water authorities—1957 law

Metropolitan districts—1929 law

Rubbish and garbage disposal authorities—1947 law

Sewage disposal and water supply system authorities—1955 law

Water authorities—1952 law

Water and/or sewage disposal districts—1956 law

Charter water authorities under the 1957 law are created by agreement between any two or more cities, villages, or townships having a combined equalized valuation of \$200 million or more, with voter approval, to acquire and operate a water supply system. A board of commissioners, appointed by the legislative bodies of the member governments, governs each authority. The authority may collect rates and charges, levy taxes, and issue general obligation bonds.

Metropolitan districts under the 1929 law are created by agreement between two or more cities, villages, or townships, or combinations thereof, to acquire and maintain water and sewage disposal systems, as well as parks and transportation facilities. The district charters provide for election or appointment of governing bodies. Each district may levy taxes and collect rates, tolls, and excises. In lieu of levying taxes, the district may prorate expenses to be provided by participating governments.

Rubbish and garbage disposal authorities under the 1947 law are formed by agreement between any two or more cities, villages, or townships to provide for collection of rubbish and garbage. The method of choosing the governing body is determined in the articles of incorporation. Any such authority determines its fiscal requirements, which are provided by the participating governments. In addition, these authorities may also issue revenue bonds. "Landfill authorities," "sanitation authorities," "incinerator authorities," "resource recovery authorities," and "sanitary districts" operate under the same provisions as rubbish and garbage disposal authorities.

Sewage disposal and water supply system authorities under the 1955 law are formed by agreement between any two or more counties, cities, villages, or townships, to acquire and operate sewage disposal, solid waste disposal, and water supply systems. The method of choosing the authority governing body is determined by the articles of incorporation. The authority determines its fiscal needs, which are provided by the participating governments. In

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addition, an authority may issue revenue bonds. “Cooperative authorities”, “solid waste management authorities”, “utilities authorities”, and “waste water authorities” operate under the same provisions as sewage disposal and water supply system authorities.

Water authorities under the 1952 law are formed by agreement between any two or more cities, villages, or townships, or combinations thereof, to provide a supply system. The articles of incorporation provide for the method of selecting the governing body as well as the method of determining the amount to be paid by each participating municipality to the authority for services. A water authority may issue revenue bonds.

Water and/or sewage disposal districts under the 1956 law are created to provide a water supply and sewage disposal system by the State Water Resources Commission on petition of two or more cities, villages, or townships after local referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may collect rates and charges, levy special benefit assessments, and issue revenue bonds.

## **SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS**

Shown below are various governmental designations in Michigan 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).

**Drainage districts (county).** Michigan law authorizes four types of drainage districts to provide drainage for agricultural and health purposes:

Chapter 4 and Chapter 20 drainage districts (each covering portions of a single county)

Chapter 5 and Chapter 21 drainage districts (each covering portions of two or more counties)

Each type is established by petition of landowners or local governments to the county drain commissioner or the state director of agriculture followed by a public hearing. Chapter 4 districts are governed by the county drain commissioner. Chapter 5 districts are governed by a board consisting of the county drain commissioners of each county served plus the state director of agriculture. Chapter 20 and 21 district boards include, in addition to the above officials, the chairperson of the county board of supervisors and a third county official, specified by statute, of each county served. Each district certifies, to the governing body of each county, city, village, or township served, the amount of property taxes and special assessments to be levied for district purposes. All types of drainage districts may issue bonds.

**Housing commissions (county, municipal, or township).** A housing commission is established by county, city, village, or township ordinance; local referendum is required if voters petition therefor. A commission consists of five members appointed by the chief administrative officer of the county, city, village, or township. In Detroit, the commission includes, in addition to the five members appointed by the mayor, representatives of the board of tenant affairs and the coordinating council on community redevelopment. A housing commission may collect rentals and issue revenue bonds. However, all leases, contracts, and purchases must be approved by the county, city, village, or township governing body. Housing commissions may also perform redevelopment functions.

**Joint water and sewage disposal systems—1939 and 1947 laws (county, municipal, or township).** The question of joint acquisition of a water supply, sewage disposal, or garbage disposal system serving two or more county, city, village, township, or metropolitan district governments may be submitted to the voters. Each system organized under these two laws may be governed by a joint board consisting of representatives of the participating governments or, as an alternative, administered by one of the participating governments under contract. Under the 1939 law, the amount of service charges to be imposed, as well as the contributions to be made by each participating government, is specified by contract. Under the 1947 law, contributions made by each participating government are in proportion to revenues received within the area of that government, unless otherwise specified by contract. Under both laws, participating governments may issue bonds.

**Michigan Municipal Bond Bank Authority (state).** This authority was established by an act of the legislature to enable local governments to borrow money for public purposes at favorable interest rates. A board of trustees, consisting of the state treasurer serving ex officio, plus two state officials serving at the pleasure of the Governor, and five other trustees appointed by the Governor, governs the authority. The authority may impose fees and charges, and may issue revenue bonds.

**Michigan State Building Authority (state).** This authority was established by special act to finance the construction of state buildings. It is governed by a board of trustees appointed by the Governor. The authority may impose rentals for use of facilities, and may issue revenue bonds.

**Michigan State Hospital Finance Authority (state).** This authority was established to finance construction of hospital facilities. The authority is governed by a board of seven members, five of whom are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the director of the department of public health and the state treasurer, who

serve in an ex officio capacity. The authority may receive grants and contributions, fix charges and fees, make mortgage loans, and issue revenue bonds.

**State Housing Development Authority (state).** This authority was established to provide mortgage credit for low and moderate income housing. The authority is governed by a board of seven members, four of whom are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate, plus the director of social services, the director of commerce, and the state treasurer, who serve in an ex officio capacity. The authority may fix fees and charges, receive gifts, grants, loans, and appropriations, make mortgage loans, and issue revenue bonds. In addition, the authority may, upon approval of the legislature and the voters, receive proceeds of state general obligation bonds.

Other examples include:

### State

Automobile Theft Prevention Authority  
Base conversion authorities  
Forest improvement districts<sup>2</sup>  
Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority Mackinac Island State Park Commission<sup>2</sup>  
Michigan Broadband Development Authority  
Michigan Economic Growth Authority  
Michigan Education Trust  
Michigan Enterprise Zone Authority  
Michigan Export Development Authority  
Michigan Family Farm Development Authority  
Michigan Forest Finance Authority  
Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority  
Michigan Higher Education Facilities Authority  
Michigan Higher Education Student Loan Authority  
Michigan Next Energy Authority  
Michigan State Natural Resources Commission  
State Strategic Fund  
State Waterways Commission

### County

Building and parking authorities  
Community mental health service boards  
Economic development commissions  
Economic development corporations  
Emergency telephone districts  
Empowerment zone development corporations  
Health districts  
Health facilities corporations (county)  
Historic districts  
Joint building and parking authorities (city-county)  
Joint county medical care facilities  
Lake improvement (“inland lake”) districts  
Library boards

Library cooperatives  
Local hospital finance authorities  
Regional libraries  
River management districts<sup>2</sup>  
Road commissions<sup>3</sup>  
Rural fire protection districts  
Zoning districts

### Municipal

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority  
Building and parking authorities  
Commercial redevelopment districts  
Community swimming pool authorities  
Downtown development authorities  
Economic development corporations  
Fire assessment districts  
Health facilities corporations  
Historic districts  
Joint environmental management authorities  
Joint building and parking authorities (city-county)  
Joint fire protection districts  
Joint water supply systems—1945 law  
Library boards in cities having less than 10,000 population and in villages  
Local development finance authorities  
Local hospital finance authorities  
Market authorities  
Mass transportation authorities with ex officio boards—1963 law  
Plant rehabilitation and industrial development districts  
River management districts<sup>2</sup>  
Rural fire protection districts  
Tax increment financing authorities  
Technology park districts  
Twin City Public Safety Authority

### Township

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority  
Building and parking authorities  
Commercial redevelopment districts  
Downtown development authorities  
Economic development corporations  
Fire assessment districts  
Historic districts  
Joint fire protection districts  
Library boards in townships  
Local development finance authorities  
Local hospital finance authorities  
Plant rehabilitation and industrial development districts  
Resort district authorities  
River management districts<sup>2</sup>  
Technology park districts  
Water supply districts—1941 law  
Zoning districts

<sup>2</sup>Legislation for this unit was repealed on 24 May 1995.

<sup>3</sup>In Wayne County, county boards of road commissioners may also build and maintain airports.

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**Other**

Industrial districts within port authorities are classified as subordinate activities of a port authority, and are not counted as separate governments.

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