

VERMONT

Vermont ranks 35th among the states in number of local governments, with 733 as of October 2007.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (14)

There are no areas in Vermont lacking county government. The county governments perform very limited functions, which consist chiefly of maintaining the courthouse and county jail. The principal administrative officers of the county are two assistant or side judges.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (282)

Subcounty general purpose governments in Vermont include municipal (city and village) governments and town governments. These two types of governments are distinguished primarily by the historical circumstances surrounding their incorporation. In Vermont, city, village, and town governments have similar powers and perform similar functions.

Municipal Governments (45)

The term "municipality" as defined for census statistics on governments applies to the cities and incorporated villages in Vermont. Cities exist outside the area of any town. Villages are included in town areas.

Towns, called "municipalities" by Vermont statutes, are counted for census purposes as township rather than municipal governments (see below).

Town or Township Governments (237)

Although not differing in legally authorized powers from cities and villages, units in Vermont designated as towns are counted in census statistics as a separate type of government. Towns perform many of the same duties commonly associated with county and municipal governments. The town governing body is called the board of selectmen.

Although town governments exist in each county in Vermont, they do not cover the entire area of each county.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (293)

School District Governments (293)

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

- City school districts
- Town school districts
- Incorporated school districts
- Interstate school districts
- Union school districts
- Unified union school districts
- Joint contract districts
- Regional technical center school districts

The city and town school districts are governed by boards of directors elected at the school district meeting where school fiscal needs are determined. Similar provisions also apply to interstate school districts.

The incorporated districts are created by special acts of the legislature but with substantially uniform provisions. Officers of each district are elected at the annual district meeting at which school tax levies are voted.

The union school districts are established by vote of the establishing school districts. Their boards are chosen by and from the participating districts. Fiscal requirements for a union school district are apportioned among the participating school districts. Union school districts organized to operate grades kindergarten through 12 are known as unified union districts.

Joint contract districts may be formed by two or more school districts. Each district is governed by members selected from and by the participating school districts. The districts have the same fiscal powers as the participating school districts.

Regional technical center school districts provide secondary technical education. The

districts are created with state approval and voter referendum within the participating city, town, incorporated, or unified union school districts. Each district is governed by a board consisting of elected and appointed officials. The districts may establish tuition and, with voter approval, issue bonds.

School districts may directly operate regional technical centers. These centers are not counted as separate governments. Comprehensive high schools are public schools other than technical centers that provide secondary technical education. These are counted as part of the operating school district.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Vermont has no dependent public school systems.

Other Educational Activities

Supervisory units, also called “supervisory unions,” are entities for the supervision of school affairs in two or more school districts. They are classified as joint educational service agencies of these districts for census purposes and are not counted as separate governments.

Schools in unorganized towns and gores are operated by officers representing the state government and are classified for census purposes as state activities. They are not counted as separate governments.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (144)

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

Consolidated Water Districts

These districts are established when voters approve the merger of the water facilities located in two or more contiguous cities or towns. An elected board of water commissioners governs each district. The district may fix water rates and levy ad valorem

taxes. The district may issue revenue bonds and, with voter approval, may issue general obligation bonds. Wholesale consolidated water districts operate under the same provisions but sell water to cities and towns on a wholesale basis rather than directly to customers.

An international water district involving Canada was created by special act. It operates under similar provisions. All bond issues require voter approval.

Fire Districts

Fire districts provide fire protection, public parks, water works, sewers, sidewalks, and street lighting, sprinkling, or oiling. These districts are established by the town selectmen upon petition of landowners. An elected prudential committee governs each district. The districts may, upon voter approval, levy ad valorem taxes.

These districts are to be distinguished from town fire districts governed by the town selectmen. Such districts are not counted as separate governments for census purposes. See “Subordinate Agencies and Areas,” below.

Housing Authorities

Housing authorities may be established by resolution of the city, village, or town governing body on its own initiative or upon petition of residents. A board of commissioners appointed by the mayor governs each authority. Housing authorities may issue bonds and fix rates and rentals. Joint housing authorities may be formed by resolution of two or more cities, villages, or towns.

Natural Resources Conservation Districts

These districts, formerly known as soil and water conservation districts, are created by the state natural resources conservation council upon petition of landowners and after referendum. Each district is governed by three elected supervisors and two supervisors appointed by the state council. The districts may require contributions from benefitted

landowners.

Regional Transit Authorities and Districts

Two types of regional transit agencies are authorized by Vermont statute:

Regional transit authorities
Regional transit districts

Two or more cities, towns, or villages may form a regional transit authority after voter approval to provide transit service directly or by contract. A board of commissioners consisting of two appointees from each member government governs each authority. The authorities may fix fares and assess participating governments on the basis of weekly miles of service. The authorities may issue bonds with voter approval. The Chittenden County Transportation Authority was established by a special act with similar provisions.

Regional transit districts may be formed by an agreement between two or more cities, towns, or villages after approval of the state transportation board and the voters. A board consisting of one or more representatives of each participating city, town, or village governs each district. The districts may fix fares, rates, and charges, and request contributions from participating governments.

Solid Waste Management Districts

Several solid waste districts have been established under special acts or intergovernmental agreements with similar provisions. The number of district board members representing each participating municipality is specified in the special act or intergovernmental agreement. These districts may apportion the share of the district budget to be met by appropriations from each participating municipality, except for the Rutland County Solid Waste District, which may levy ad valorem taxes and receive revenues from the sale of steam. These districts may issue bonds (after voter approval in the case of the Rutland County Solid Waste District).

Solid waste management districts also may be created as union municipal districts.

Union Municipal Districts

These districts are created upon approval of the attorney general and the voters of two or more member cities, towns, or villages. The districts promote more efficient and economical operation of any local government service, such as solid waste management, highways, or parks and recreation. The districts are governed by a joint municipal survey committee consisting of three representatives designated by the legislative branch of each participating city, town, or village. Also, if there is a local planning commission, one of the three representatives shall be a commission member. If the municipality is served by a regional planning commission, one member shall be an ex officio representative. The districts may issue bonds upon voter approval. Cities, towns, and villages that are party to the district contract may appropriate funds for the district and levy taxes and issue special purpose bonds for payment of the appropriation.

Some union municipal districts may be classified as subordinate agencies based on the provisions of the interlocal agreement. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Vermont Public Power Supply Authority

This authority was created by special act from the Vermont Public Power Supply System Inc. The authority is governed by a board of directors appointed by the governing bodies of participating cities, towns, villages, and electric cooperatives. The authority may collect rates and fees and may issue revenue bonds.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Vermont 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 organizations are discussed below (see “Public School Systems,” above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Vermont Educational and Health Buildings Financing Agency (state). This authority was established by a special act. The agency board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor, two additional members appointed by those seven, plus the commissioner of education, the secretary of human services, the state treasurer, and the secretary of administration. The authority may fix rentals and charges collected for use of authority facilities and may issue revenue bonds.

Vermont Housing Finance Agency (state). This agency was formed to provide mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income housing. The governing body is a board of seven commissioners, including four commissioners appointed by the Governor plus the commissioner of banking, insurance, securities, and health care administration; the state treasurer, and the secretary of commerce and community development. The agency may fix charges in connection with its loans and issue revenue bonds.

Vermont Municipal Bond Bank (state). This agency was established by special act to make funds available at reduced rates to governmental units in the state for financing public improvements. The bank governing board consists of the state treasurer and four directors appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate. The bank may fix fees and charges for its services and issue revenue bonds.

Vermont State Housing Authority (state).

This authority was established by special act to provide assisted housing. A seven-member commission appointed by the Governor with consent of the senate governs the authority. The authority may issue revenue bonds and fix and collect charges for its services.

Other examples include:

State

District environmental commissions
Emergency medical services districts
Highway districts
Vermont Economic Development Authority
Vermont Film Corporation (Vermont Film Commission)
Vermont Health Care Authority
Vermont Qualifying Facility Contract Mitigation Authority
Vermont State Colleges, Inc.
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
Vermont Telecommunications Authority
Vermont Transportation Authority

Municipal

Conservation commissions
Local health districts
Union municipal districts
Urban renewal agencies

Town

Conservation commissions
Fire districts governed by town selectmen
Local health districts
Union municipal districts
Urban renewal agencies

Vermont laws also provide for various types of local areas for election purposes, administration of justice, and zoning.