

THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION ARTICLE 9. COUNTIES

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Sec. 1. CREATION OF COUNTIES. The Legislature shall have power to create counties for the convenience of the people subject to the following provisions:

(1) Within the territory of any county or counties, no new county shall be created with a less area than seven hundred square miles, nor shall any such county now existing be reduced to a less area than seven hundred square miles. No new counties shall be created so as to approach nearer than twelve miles of the county seat of any county from which it may in whole or in part be taken. Counties of a less area than nine hundred, but of seven hundred or more square miles, within counties now existing, may be created by a two-thirds vote of each House of the Legislature, taken by yeas and nays and entered on the journals. Any county now existing may be reduced to an area of not less than seven hundred square miles by a like two-thirds vote. When any part of a county is stricken off and attached to, or created into another county, the part stricken off shall be holden for and obliged to pay its proportion of all the liabilities then existing, of the county from which it was taken, in such manner as may be prescribed by law.

(2) No part of any existing county shall be detached from it and attached to another existing county until the proposition for such change shall have been submitted, in such manner as may be provided by law, to a vote of the voters of both counties, and shall have received a majority of those voting on the question in each.

(Amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 1: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 1-A. COUNTIES BORDERING ON GULF OF MEXICO OR TIDEWATER LIMITS THEREOF; REGULATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES ON BEACHES. The Legislature may authorize the governing body of any county bordering on the Gulf of Mexico or the tidewater limits thereof to regulate and restrict the speed, parking and travel of motor

vehicles on beaches available to the public by virtue of public right and the littering of such beaches.

Nothing in this amendment shall increase the rights of any riparian or littoral landowner with regard to beaches available to the public by virtue of public right or submerged lands.

The Legislature may enact any laws not inconsistent with this Section which it may deem necessary to permit said counties to implement, enforce and administer the provisions contained herein.

Should the Legislature enact legislation in anticipation of the adoption of this amendment, such legislation shall not be invalid by reason of its anticipatory character.

(Added Nov. 6, 1962.)

Sec. 2. REMOVAL OF COUNTY SEATS. The Legislature shall pass laws regulating the manner of removing county seats, but no county seat situated within five miles of the geographical centre of the county shall be removed, except by a vote of two-thirds of all the voters voting on the subject. A majority of such voters, however, voting at such election, may remove a county seat from a point more than five miles from the geographical centre of the county to a point within five miles of such centre, in either case the centre to be determined by a certificate from the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

(Amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 2: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 3. (Repealed Aug. 5, 1969.)

Sec. 4. COUNTY-WIDE HOSPITAL DISTRICTS. The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of county-wide Hospital Districts in counties having a population in excess of 190,000 and in Galveston County, with power to issue bonds for the purchase, acquisition, construction, maintenance and operation of any county owned hospital, or where the hospital system is jointly operated by a county and city within the county, and to provide for the transfer to the county-wide Hospital District of the title to any land, buildings or equipment, jointly or separately owned, and for the

assumption by the district of any outstanding bonded indebtedness theretofore issued by any county or city for the establishment of hospitals or hospital facilities; to levy a tax not to exceed seventy-five (\$.75) cents on the One Hundred (\$100.00) Dollars valuation of all taxable property within such district, provided, however, that such district shall be approved at an election held for that purpose, and that only qualified voters in such county shall vote therein; provided further, that such Hospital District shall assume full responsibility for providing medical and hospital care to needy inhabitants of the county, and thereafter such county and cities therein shall not levy any other tax for hospital purposes; and provided further that should such Hospital District construct, maintain and support a hospital or hospital system, that the same shall never become a charge against the State of Texas, nor shall any direct appropriation ever be made by the Legislature for the construction, maintenance or improvement of the said hospital or hospitals.

(Added Nov. 2, 1954; amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 4: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 5. CITY OF AMARILLO; WICHITA COUNTY; JEFFERSON COUNTY; CREATION AND FUNDING OF HOSPITAL DISTRICTS. (a) The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of two hospital districts, one to be coextensive with and have the same boundaries as the incorporated City of Amarillo, as such boundaries now exist or as they may hereafter be lawfully extended, and the other to be coextensive with Wichita County.

If such district or districts are created, they may be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed Seventy-five Cents (75¢) on the One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) valuation of taxable property within the district; provided, however, no tax may be levied until approved by a majority vote of the participating resident qualified voters. The maximum rate of tax may be changed at subsequent elections so long as obligations are not impaired, and not to exceed the maximum limit of Seventy-five Cents (75¢) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) valuation, and no election shall be required by subsequent changes in the boundaries of the City of Amarillo.

If such tax is authorized, no political subdivision or municipality within or having the same boundaries as the district may levy a tax for medical or hospital care for needy individuals, nor shall they maintain or erect hospital facilities, but the district shall by resolution assume all such responsibilities and shall assume all of the liabilities and obligations (including bonds and warrants) of such subdivisions or municipalities or both. The maximum tax rate submitted shall be sufficient to discharge such obligations, liabilities, and responsibilities, and to maintain and operate the hospital system, and the Legislature may authorize the district to issue tax bonds for the purpose of the purchase, construction, acquisition, repair or renovation of improvements and initially equipping the same, and such bonds shall be payable from said Seventy-five Cents (75¢) tax. The Legislature shall provide for transfer of title to properties to the district.

(b) The Legislature may by law permit the County of Potter (in which the City of Amarillo is partially located) to render financial aid to that district by paying a part of the expenses of operating and maintaining the system and paying a part of the debts of the district (whether assumed or created by the district) and may authorize the levy of a tax not to exceed Ten Cents (10¢) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) valuation (in addition to other taxes permitted by this Constitution) upon all property within the county but without the City of Amarillo at the time such levy is made for such purposes. If such tax is authorized, the district shall by resolution assume the responsibilities, obligations, and liabilities of the county in the manner and to the extent hereinabove provided for political subdivisions having boundaries coextensive with the district, and the county shall not thereafter levy taxes (other than herein provided) for hospital purposes nor for providing hospital care for needy individuals of the county.

(c) The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of a hospital district within Jefferson County, the boundaries of which shall include only the area comprising the Jefferson County Drainage District No. 7 and the Port Arthur Independent School District, as such boundaries existed on the first day of January, 1957, with the power to issue bonds for the sole purpose of

purchasing a site for, and the construction and initial equipping of, a hospital system, and with the power to levy a tax of not to exceed Seventy-five Cents (75¢) on the One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) valuation of property therein for the purpose of paying the principal and interest on such bonds.

The bonds may not be issued or such tax be levied until approved by such voters.

The district shall not have the power to levy any tax for maintenance or operation of the hospital or facilities, but shall contract with other political subdivisions of the state or private individuals, associations, or corporations for such purposes.

If the district hereinabove authorized is finally created, no other hospital district may be created embracing any part of the territory within its boundaries, but the Legislature by law may authorize the creation of a hospital district incorporating therein the remainder of Jefferson County, having the powers and duties and with the limitations presently provided by Article IX, Section 4, of the Constitution of Texas. A majority of those participating in the election voting in favor of the district shall be necessary for bonds to be issued.

(d) Should the Legislature enact enabling laws in anticipation of the adoption of this amendment, such Acts shall not be invalid because of their anticipatory character.

(e) The legislature by law may authorize Randall County to render financial assistance to the Amarillo Hospital District by paying part of the district's operating and maintenance expenses and the debts assumed or created by the district and to levy a tax for that purpose in an amount not to exceed seventy-five cents (75¢) on the One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) valuation on all property in Randall County that is not within the boundaries of the City of Amarillo or the South Randall County Hospital District. This tax is in addition to any other tax authorized by this constitution. If the tax is authorized by the legislature and approved by the voters of the area to be taxed, the Amarillo Hospital District shall, by resolution, assume the responsibilities, obligations, and liabilities of Randall County in accordance with Subsection (a) of this section and, except as provided by this subsection, Randall

County may not levy taxes or issue bonds for hospital purposes or for providing hospital care for needy inhabitants of the county.

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of Article IX of this constitution, if a hospital district was created or authorized under a constitutional provision that includes a description of the district's boundaries or jurisdiction, the legislature by law may authorize the district to change its boundaries or jurisdiction. The change must be approved by a majority of the qualified voters of the district voting at an election called and held for that purpose. (Added Nov. 4, 1958; Subsecs. (e) and (f) added Nov. 3, 1987; Subsecs. (a), (c), and (e) amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 5: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 6. (Repealed Nov. 2, 1999.)

(TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 6: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 7. HIDALGO COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT; CREATION; TAX RATE. The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of a Hospital District co-extensive with Hidalgo County, having the powers and duties and with the limitations presently provided in Article IX, Section 5(a), of the Constitution of Texas, as it applies to Hidalgo County, except that the maximum rate of tax that the said Hidalgo County Hospital District may be authorized to levy shall be ten cents (10¢) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100) valuation of taxable property within the District subject to district taxation. (Added Nov. 8, 1960.)

Sec. 8. COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRECINCT NO. 4 OF COMANCHE COUNTY; HOSPITAL DISTRICT; CREATION; TAX RATE. (a) The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of a Hospital District to be co-extensive with the limits of County Commissioners Precinct No. 4 of Comanche County, Texas.

If such District is created, it may be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed seventy-five cents (75¢) on the One Hundred Dollar (\$100) valuation of taxable property within the District; provided, however, no tax may be levied until approved by a majority vote of the participating resident qualified voters. The maximum rate of

tax may be changed at subsequent elections so long as obligations are not impaired, and not to exceed the maximum limit of seventy-five cents (75¢) per One Hundred Dollar (\$100) valuation, and no election shall be required by subsequent changes in the boundaries of the Commissioners Precinct No. 4 of Comanche County.

If such tax is authorized, no political subdivision or municipality within or having the same boundaries as the District may levy a tax for medical or hospital care for needy individuals, nor shall they maintain or erect hospital facilities, but the District shall by resolution assume all such responsibilities and shall assume all of the liabilities and obligations (including bonds and warrants) of such subdivisions or municipalities or both. The maximum tax rate submitted shall be sufficient to discharge such obligations, liabilities, and responsibilities, and to maintain and operate the hospital system, and the Legislature may authorize the District to issue tax bonds for the purpose of the purchase, construction, acquisition, repair or renovation of improvements and initially equipping the same, and such bonds shall be payable from said seventy-five cent (75¢) tax. The Legislature shall provide for transfer of title to properties to the District.

(b) The Legislature may by law permit the County of Comanche to render financial aid to that District by paying a part of the expenses of operating and maintaining the system and paying a part of the debts of the District (whether assumed or created by the District) and may authorize the levy of a tax not to exceed ten cents (10¢) per One Hundred Dollar (\$100) valuation (in addition to other taxes permitted by this Constitution) upon all property within the County but without the County Commissioners Precinct No. 4 of Comanche County at the time such levy is made for such purposes. If such tax is authorized, the District shall by resolution assume the responsibilities, obligations, and liabilities of the County in the manner and to the extent hereinabove provided for political subdivisions having boundaries co-extensive with the District, and the County shall not thereafter levy taxes (other than herein provided) for hospital purposes nor for providing hospital care for needy individuals of the County.

(c) Should the Legislature enact enabling laws in

anticipation of the adoption of this amendment, such Acts shall not be invalid because of their anticipatory character.

(Added Nov. 8, 1960; Subsec. (a) amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 8: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 9. HOSPITAL DISTRICTS; CREATION, OPERATION, POWERS, DUTIES AND DISSOLUTION. The Legislature may by general or special law provide for the creation, establishment, maintenance and operation of hospital districts composed of one or more counties or all or any part of one or more counties with power to issue bonds for the purchase, construction, acquisition, repair or renovation of buildings and improvements and equipping same, for hospital purposes; providing for the transfer to the hospital district of the title to any land, buildings, improvements and equipment located wholly within the district which may be jointly or separately owned by any city, town or county, providing that any district so created shall assume full responsibility for providing medical and hospital care for its needy inhabitants and assume the outstanding indebtedness incurred by cities, towns and counties for hospital purposes prior to the creation of the district, if same are located wholly within its boundaries, and a pro rata portion of such indebtedness based upon the then last approved tax assessment rolls of the included cities, towns and counties if less than all the territory thereof is included within the district boundaries; providing that after its creation no other municipality or political subdivision shall have the power to levy taxes or issue bonds or other obligations for hospital purposes or for providing medical care within the boundaries of the district; providing for the levy of annual taxes at a rate not to exceed seventy-five cents (\$.75) on the One Hundred Dollar valuation of all taxable property within such district for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the district's bonds, the indebtedness assumed by it and its maintenance and operating expenses, providing that such district shall not be created or such tax authorized unless approved by a majority of the qualified voters thereof voting at an election called for the purpose; and providing further that the support and maintenance of the district's hospital system shall never become a

charge against or obligation of the State of Texas nor shall any direct appropriation be made by the Legislature for the construction, maintenance or improvement of any of the facilities of such district.

Provided, however, that no district shall be created by special law except after thirty (30) days' public notice to the district affected, and in no event may the Legislature provide for a district to be created without the affirmative vote of a majority of the qualified voters in the district concerned.

The Legislature may also provide for the dissolution of hospital districts provided that a process is afforded by statute for:

(1) determining the desire of a majority of the qualified voters within the district to dissolve it;

(2) disposing of or transferring the assets, if any, of the district; and

(3) satisfying the debts and bond obligations, if any, of the district, in such manner as to protect the interests of the citizens within the district, including their collective property rights in the assets and property of the district, provided, however, that any grant from federal funds, however dispensed, shall be considered an obligation to be repaid in satisfaction and provided that no election to dissolve shall be held more often than once each year. In such connection, the statute shall provide against disposal or transfer of the assets of the district except for due compensation unless such assets are transferred to another governmental agency, such as a county, embracing such district and using such transferred assets in such a way as to benefit citizens formerly within the district.

(Added Nov. 6, 1962; amended Nov. 8, 1966, and Nov. 7, 1989.)

Sec. 9A. HOSPITAL DISTRICTS; REGULATION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES. The legislature by law may determine the health care services a hospital district is required to provide, the requirements a resident must meet to qualify for services, and any other relevant provisions necessary to regulate the provision of health care to residents.

(Added Nov. 5, 1985.)

Sec. 9B. HOSPITAL DISTRICTS IN COUNTIES WITH POPULATION OF 75,000 OR LESS. The legislature by general or special law may provide for the creation, establishment, maintenance, and operation of hospital districts located wholly in a county with a population of 75,000 or less, according to the most recent federal decennial census, and may authorize the commissioners court to levy a tax on the ad valorem property located in the district for the support and maintenance of the district. A district may not be created or a tax levied unless the creation and tax are approved by a majority of the registered voters who reside in the district. The legislature shall set the maximum tax rate a district may levy. The legislature may provide that the county in which the district is located may issue general obligation bonds for the district and provide other services to the district. The district may provide hospital care, medical care, and other services authorized by the legislature.

(Added Nov. 7, 1989.)

Sec. 10. (Blank.)

Sec. 11. HOSPITAL DISTRICTS; OCHILTREE, CASTRO, HANSFORD, AND HOPKINS COUNTIES; CREATION; TAXES. (a) The Legislature may by law authorize the creation of hospital districts in Ochiltree, Castro, Hansford and Hopkins Counties, each district to be coextensive with the limits of such county.

(b) If any such district is created, it may be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed Seventy-five Cents (75¢) on the One Hundred Dollar (\$100) valuation of taxable property within the district; provided, however, no tax may be levied until approved by a majority vote of the participating resident qualified voters. The maximum rate of tax may be changed at subsequent elections so long as obligations are not impaired, and not to exceed the maximum limit of Seventy-five Cents (75¢) per One Hundred Dollar (\$100) valuation.

(c) If such tax is authorized, no political subdivision or municipality within or having the same boundaries as the district

may levy a tax for medical or hospital care for needy individuals, nor shall they maintain or erect hospital facilities, but the district shall by resolution assume all such responsibilities and shall assume all of the liabilities and obligations (including bonds and warrants) of such subdivisions or municipalities or both. The maximum tax rate submitted shall be sufficient to discharge obligations, liabilities, and responsibilities, and to maintain and operate the hospital system, and the Legislature may authorize the district to issue tax bonds for the purpose of the purchase, construction, acquisition, repair or renovation of improvements and initially equipping the same, and such bonds shall be payable from said Seventy-five Cent (75¢) tax. The Legislature shall provide for transfer of title to properties to the district.

(Added Nov. 6, 1962; amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 11: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 12. AIRPORT AUTHORITIES. (a) The Legislature may by law provide for the creation, establishment, maintenance and operation of Airport Authorities composed of one or more counties, with power to issue general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, either or both of them, for the purchase, acquisition by the exercise of the power of eminent domain or otherwise, construction, reconstruction, repair or renovation of any airport or airports, landing fields and runways, airport buildings, hangars, facilities, equipment, fixtures, and any and all property, real or personal, necessary to operate, equip and maintain an airport.

(b) The Legislature shall provide for the option by the governing body of the city or cities whose airport facilities are served by certificated airlines and whose facility or some interest therein, is proposed to be or has been acquired by the Authority, to either appoint or elect a Board of Directors of said Authority. If the Directors are appointed such appointment shall be made by the County Commissioners Court after consultation with and consent of the governing body or bodies of such city or cities. If the Board of Directors is elected they shall be elected by the qualified voters of the county which chooses to elect the Directors to represent that county. Directors shall serve without compensation for a term

fixed by the Legislature not to exceed six (6) years, shall be selected on the basis of the proportionate population of each county based upon the last preceding Federal Census, and shall be residents of such county. No county shall have less than one (1) member on the Board of Directors.

(c) The Legislature shall provide for the holding of an election in each county proposing the creation of an Authority to be called by the Commissioners Court or Commissioners Courts, as the case may be, upon petition of five per cent (5%) of the qualified voters within the county or counties. The elections must be held on the same day if more than one county is included. No more than one (1) such election may be called in a county until after the expiration of one (1) year in the event such an election has failed, and thereafter only upon a petition of ten per cent (10%) of the qualified voters being presented to the Commissioners Court or Commissioners Courts of the county or counties in which such an election has failed. In the event that two or more counties vote on the proposition of the creation of an Authority therein, the proposition shall not be deemed to carry unless the majority of the qualified voters in each county voting thereon vote in favor thereof. An Airport Authority may be created and be composed of the county or counties that vote in favor of its creation if separate propositions are submitted to the voters of each county so that they may vote for a two or more county Authority or a single county Authority.

(d) The Legislature shall provide for the appointment by the Board of Directors of an Assessor and Collector of Taxes in the Authority, whether constituted of one or more counties, whose duty it shall be to assess all taxable property, both real and personal, and collect the taxes thereon, based upon the tax rolls approved by the Board of Directors, the tax to be levied not to exceed Seventy-Five Cents (\$.75) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100) assessed valuation of the property. The property of state regulated common carriers required by law to pay a tax upon intangible assets shall not be subject to taxation by the Authority. The taxable property shall be assessed on a valuation not to exceed the market value and shall be equal and uniform throughout the Authority as is otherwise

provided by the Constitution.

(e) The Legislature shall authorize the purchase or acquisition by the Authority of any existing airport facility publicly owned and financed and served by certificated airlines, in fee or of any interest therein, or to enter into any lease agreement therefor, upon such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreeable to the Authority and the owner of such facilities, or authorize the acquisition of same through the exercise of the power of eminent domain. In the event of such acquisition, if there are any general obligation bonds that the owner of the publicly owned airport facility has outstanding, the same shall be fully assumed by the Authority and sufficient taxes levied by the Authority to discharge said outstanding indebtedness. If any city or owner has outstanding revenue bonds where the revenues of the airport have been pledged or said bonds constitute a lien against the airport facilities, the Authority shall assume and discharge all the obligations of the city under the ordinances and bond indentures under which said revenue bonds have been issued and sold.

(f) Any city which owns airport facilities not serving certificated airlines which are not purchased or acquired or taken over as herein provided by such Authority shall have the power to operate the same under the existing laws or as the same may hereafter be amended.

(g) Any such Authority when created may be granted the power and authority to promulgate, adopt and enforce appropriate zoning regulations to protect the airport from hazards and obstructions which would interfere with the use of the airport and its facilities for landing and take-off.

(h) An additional county or counties may be added to an existing Authority if a petition of five per cent (5%) of the qualified voters is filed with and an election is called by the Commissioners Court of the county or counties seeking admission to an Authority. If the vote is favorable, then admission may be granted to such county or counties by the Board of Directors of the then existing Authority upon such terms and conditions as they may agree upon and evidenced by a resolution approved by two-thirds (2/3rds) of the then existing Board of Directors. The county or

counties that may be so added to the then existing Authority shall be given representation on the Board of Directors by adding additional directors in proportion to their population according to the last preceding Federal Census.

(Added Nov. 8, 1966; amended Nov. 2, 1999.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISIONS for Sec. 12: See Appendix, Note 1.)

Sec. 13. PARTICIPATION OF MUNICIPALITIES AND OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS IN ESTABLISHMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION, OR PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES. Notwithstanding any other section of this article, the Legislature in providing for the creation, establishment, maintenance and operation of a hospital district, shall not be required to provide that such district shall assume full responsibility for the establishment, maintenance, support, or operation of mental health services or mental retardation services including the operation of any community mental health centers, community mental retardation centers or community mental health and mental retardation centers which may exist or be thereafter established within the boundaries of such district, nor shall the Legislature be required to provide that such district shall assume full responsibility of public health department units and clinics and related public health activities or services, and the Legislature shall not be required to restrict the power of any municipality or political subdivision to levy taxes or issue bonds or other obligations or to expend public moneys for the establishment, maintenance, support, or operation of mental health services, mental retardation services, public health units or clinics or related public health activities or services or the operation of such community mental health or mental retardation centers within the boundaries of the hospital districts; and unless a statute creating a hospital district shall expressly prohibit participation by any entity other than the hospital district in the establishment, maintenance, or support of mental health services, mental retardation services, public health units or clinics or related public health activities within or partly within the boundaries of any hospital district, any municipality or any other political subdivision or state-supported entity within the

hospital district may participate in the establishment, maintenance, and support of mental health services, mental retardation services, public health units and clinics and related public health activities and may levy taxes, issue bonds or other obligations, and expend public moneys for such purposes as provided by law.

(Added Nov. 11, 1967.)

Sec. 14. COUNTY POOR HOUSE AND FARM. Each county in the State may provide, in such manner as may be prescribed by law, a Manual Labor Poor House and Farm, for taking care of, managing, employing and supplying the wants of its indigent and poor inhabitants.

(Formerly Sec. 8, Art. XVI, amended to redesignate as Sec. 14, Art. IX, Nov. 6, 2001.) (TEMPORARY TRANSITION PROVISION for Sec. 14: See Appendix, Note 3.)