



# TEXAS COUNTY OFFICIALS<sup>1</sup>

## COUNTY JUDGE

ELECTED AT-LARGE

- Presiding officer and voting member of the Commissioner's Court
- Represents the county in many administrative functions
- In smaller counties, prepares recommended county budget for Commissioner's Court approval
- Depending on county size, may have judicial duties, such as presiding over misdemeanor criminal and small civil cases
- Head of emergency management

## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ELECTED<sup>2</sup>

- Broad policy-making authority through resolutions and county orders
- Adopts the county's budget (including county department/agency budgets) and tax rate
- Approves all county budgeted purchases
- Fills vacancies in appointive offices
- Sets all salaries and benefits for county employees
- Exclusive authority to authorize contracts
- Provides and maintains all county buildings and facilities

## SHERIFF

ELECTED

- Serves as a licensed peace officer; responsible for enforcing criminal state law in the county
- Manages and operates county jail
- Provides security, serves warrants, papers, and other processes of the county courts
- Regulates bail bondsmen in counties with no bail bond board
- Seizes property after judgment
- Enforces traffic laws on county roads

## CONSTABLE

ELECTED

- Executive officer of the precinct/voting district in which they reside
- Serves as a licensed peace officer and performs various law enforcement functions, including making arrests and issuing traffic citations
- Serves warrants and civil papers such as subpoenas and temporary restraining orders
- Serves as bailiff for Justice of the Peace Courts

## DISTRICT/COUNTY ATTORNEY<sup>3</sup>

ELECTED

- Investigates and prosecutes criminal cases
- Presents cases to the grand jury
- May obtain protective orders for victims of violence
- Represents the state in removing children from abusive households
- Serves as legal counsel for the county; provides legal advice to the Commissioner's Court and to other county officials
- Brings civil legal actions on behalf of the county and defends the county in lawsuits against it

<sup>1</sup> Each of these county officials serves a 4-year term, unless they resign or are removed from office, which would trigger a special election. They may be re-elected and serve an unlimited number of terms.

<sup>2</sup> County commissioners are elected to staggered, four-year terms, with two taking office every other year, and are elected by the votes of the precinct they represent.

<sup>3</sup> Some counties have both a County Attorney and a District Attorney, while other counties will only have one. For example, Bexar, Dallas and Tarrant counties have a District Attorney only. Counties such as Harris, Hays, El Paso and Nueces have a District Attorney that prosecutes all criminal cases, and a County Attorney who provides legal advice to the County and generally does not handle criminal prosecutions. In places like Travis County, the District Attorney handles felony prosecutions, and the County Attorney handles misdemeanor prosecutions and civil matters.