

# CHAPTER 30

# Local Government

## Why It Matters

Government services such as education, law enforcement, street maintenance, and public health are usually provided by local units of government such as cities, counties, and school boards.

## The Impact Today

Although counties were established when Texas was mainly a rural state, county governments have adapted to meet the new problems and challenges of urban Texas. Cities, too, have developed different ways to organize themselves to ensure the highest level of service for their citizens. Governments at every level work best when citizens keep informed and get involved.

1929

★ League of United Latin American Citizens founded

1947

★ Houston adopted strong mayor-council city government

1923

1923

• Equal Rights Amendment first proposed



1947

1945

• United Nations organization formed



1963

1963

• Martin Luther King, Jr., organized March on Washington



Texas



United States



World



Houston, Texas's largest city, boasts a strong mayor-council city government and an impressive skyline.

**Compare-Contrast Study Foldable** Make this foldable to help you organize what you learn about local governments in Texas and citizen participation in government.

**Step 1** Fold a sheet of paper in half from side to side.

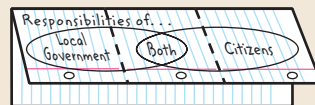


Fold it so the left edge lays about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the right edge.

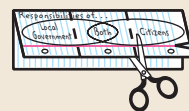
**Step 2** Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.



**Step 3** Unfold your foldable and label it as shown.



**Step 4** Cut the top layer only along both folds.



This will make three tabs.

**Reading and Writing** As you read the chapter, use your foldable Venn diagram to write information on types of local government and ways in which citizens can be involved in them. Under the "Both" tab, explain the responsibilities citizens have to their local governments and the responsibilities local governments have to their citizens.



**2001**  
★ Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum opened in Austin

1982

1989

1995

2002

**1982**

- Equal Rights Amendment defeated

**1989**

- Chinese students protested at Tiananmen Square

**1994**

- Nelson Mandela elected president of South Africa



**TEXAS HISTORY Online**

**Chapter Overview**  
Visit the [texans.glencoe.com](http://texans.glencoe.com) Web site and click on **Chapter 30—Chapter Overviews** to preview chapter information.



# Types of Local Government

## Guide to Reading

### Main Idea

Local government affects everyday life in neighborhoods and cities.

### Key Terms

general-law city, home-rule city, mayor-council, ordinance, council-manager, commission, appraise, commissioners court, precinct, real estate

### Preview of Events

1901

Sweetwater incorporates as a commission city

1931

Dallas becomes a council-manager city government

1947 1951

Houston adopts a strong-mayor-council form of city government

San Antonio becomes a council-manager city government

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** Complete a chart like the one shown here. Fill in three of the services provided by each type of local government.

County Government	City Government	Special Government Districts

### Read to Learn

- about the different types of local governments.
- about county officials.
- about special districts.

### Section Theme

**Government and Democracy** Types of local government include county government, city government, and special government districts.



Marcus Puente

## A Texas Story

After two years working for the Yorktown school district in Dewitt County and hearing co-workers' complaints, Marcus Puente decided to take action. With three seats on the school board up for election, Puente threw his hat in the ring. He was one of six candidates. A 2000 honors graduate at Yorktown High School, Puente had no political experience. With help from friends and family, he hit the campaign trail. "People started listening to me because nobody else really knew how everybody in the community felt," he said.

### Local Governments at Work

Local government affects people on a day-to-day basis. Services provided by local government include police protection, garbage collection, water and sewer services, education, and fire protection. If your house is on fire, you

CLICK HERE

call your local fire department, not someone in Washington, D.C. When garbage is not picked up, local government is responsible for restoring service. There are three basic types of local governments in Texas—city, county, and special districts.

## Two Kinds of City Government

Some cities and towns are called **municipalities**. If a city government incorporates by citizen request, it is considered a **municipal** government. Cities in Texas operate under one of two types of law—general law or home rule. Small cities with populations of less than 5,000 may incorporate as a **general-law city**. As of 2002, there were nearly 1,000 general-law cities in Texas. These cities function under the general laws of Texas and often provide basic services such as police, fire protection, and water and sewer service.

A **home-rule city** may organize itself and conduct its business in any way its citizens see fit, as long as no state or federal laws are violated. Approximately one-fourth of Texas cities are home-rule cities. Such cities try to increase their tax bases by becoming larger. One way to do this is to annex, or take over, nearby land. Texas law, however, states that city services must be provided to newly added areas within

four and one-half years. This is to ensure that people living in the newly annexed areas fully share in the benefits that the city government already provides to those living in the longer established parts of the city. Some annexations are not popular with the residents. Efforts are being made to change the state laws so that people living in an area have more to say about what happens to their town.

TEXAS  
HISTORY  
Online

**Student Web Activity** Visit the [texans.glencoe.com](http://texans.glencoe.com) Web site and click on **Chapter 30—Student Web Activity** to learn more about a mayor's duties.

## Organization of City Governments

Three common forms of city governments in Texas include **mayor-council**, **council-manager**, and **commission**.

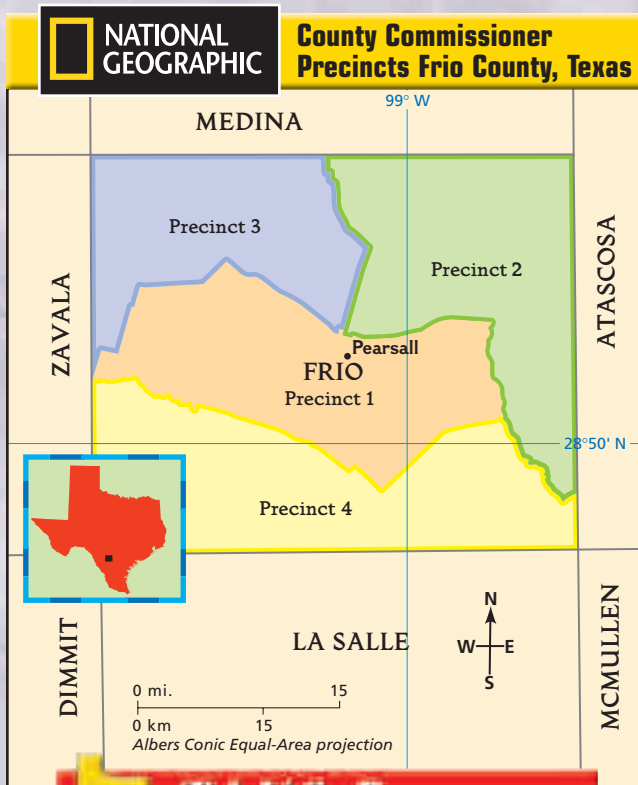
The **mayor-council** city government is used by some cities in Texas. This model gives the mayor executive authority. There are strong-mayor and weak-mayor types of this form. In a **strong-mayor city**, the mayor is responsible for day-to-day operations, hiring and firing department heads, and vetoing city council actions. Houston and El Paso are strong-mayor cities.



### Exploring Government

Firefighters provide valuable services to city and county residents. **What are some of the ways that firefighters assist local communities?**





**TAKS PRACTICE**

For elections, counties are divided into precincts. For local governments, counties are divided into cities and unincorporated areas.

**Analyzing** Do you think Harris County would have fewer or more precincts than Frio County? Why?

Houston first started using this model in 1947. In **weak-mayor cities**, the mayor shares administrative duties with the city council. City councils regularly consider **ordinances**, or local laws, that address health and public safety.

In **council-manager** cities, generally home-ruled ones, the mayor has less power, presiding over council meetings and having only one vote, like the other council members. Dallas is the largest city in the United States to use this type of local government, having adopted it in 1931. San Antonio changed to this structure in 1951. In these cities, the city council hires a professional city manager to manage the day-to-day affairs of the city and prepare the city budget. He or she can hire and fire city employees.

In **commission** cities, voters elect commissioners to operate the government. The commissioners serve as a city council, yet each member is

also head of a department, such as public safety or human services. The mayor has little power, presiding over meetings and acting as a spokesperson for the council. If commissioners follow different goals, it is difficult to coordinate city policies. Commission city government is the least common form of local government in Texas. It was often used in the early part of the century. Both Galveston and Sweetwater adopted this form in 1901.

## City Governments Need Funds

Local governments need money to operate and provide services for their citizens. Cities have several sources of revenue, the most important of which is **property taxes**. These taxes are paid by the owners of land, houses, and other buildings and depend on the financial worth of the property. Tax assessors inspect the property, **appraise**, or determine the value, and make recommendations to the city.

Cities can also charge a sales tax on the value of goods sold within the city. Other sources of revenue include fees for services such as garbage collection, hospital care, and use of

parks. Building permits and fines collected from traffic violations are also a source of money.

Local governments in Texas spend their money on police and fire protection, jail maintenance, parks, streets, sanitation, recycling, storm drainage, bridges, animal shelters, libraries, museums, and airports. When money is needed for special long-term projects, such as building a convention center or sports arena, governments may issue **bonds**, certificates that guarantee payment plus interest, or ask for state or federal assistance.

 **Reading Check** **Identifying** Name five services that taxes pay for in local governments.

## County Government

The county level of government was originally created to establish laws and procedures for rural areas. The county remains the most important unit of local government. All 254 counties in Texas exist as administrative areas of the state and are staffed by locally elected officials.

One of the most important responsibilities of county governments is to help the state government fulfill its duties. County officials help collect state taxes, handle important election matters, and issue licenses. County courthouses maintain records of births, deaths, marriages, and property ownership. Every Texas county works with state and federal agencies to provide a wide variety of services and programs for its citizens.

## County Officials

The Texas constitution requires that the government be set up the same way in every county. The most important governing body is the **commissioners court**, responsible for determining the county's budget, setting the property-tax rate, and deciding how tax monies are spent.

Each county in Texas is divided into four districts, or **precincts**, that elect one county commissioner each. The commissioners serve four-year terms. The county judge, responsible for the day-to-day administration of the county, is elected in a county-wide election and also serves a four-year term. The county judge heads the commissioners court.

The commissioners court does not conduct trials. Instead, it makes policies and directs

### Elected County Officials

County Official	Job Description and Duties
<b>Commissioner</b>	Four commissioners comprise each commissioners court. They make policies and direct county business, including approving budgets and setting tax rates.
<b>County Judge</b>	The chief administrator of the court; Heads the commissioners court, prepares budgets for approval, serves as judge of the county court, performs special election duties
<b>Sheriff</b>	A county's chief law-enforcement officer; Along with deputies (in larger counties), manages county jails and prisoners
<b>County Attorney</b>	Serves as legal adviser to other county officials and represents the county in criminal cases
<b>County Clerk</b>	Maintains records of the county courts and registers births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and property transfers; Prepares election ballots; Registers voters
<b>District Clerk</b>	Keeps the records of the state district courts
<b>Treasurer</b>	Acts as the county's banker, receives money, and pays the county's bills
<b>Tax Assessor</b>	Collects property taxes and license fees; Issues automobile titles
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Larger counties have four to eight justices of the peace who hear minor criminal and civil cases. Small counties may have only one.
<b>Constable</b>	Serves official papers issued by the courts



**Describing** County department heads oversee many important functions. *Which county official would hear minor criminal or civil cases?*

county business. Among the projects the commissioners court works on are building and repairing roads and bridges, operating the courthouse and jail, and maintaining county hospitals, museums, libraries, parks, and airports. The chart on page 659 shows the major county officials in Texas and their duties.

## Financing County Government

Counties rely on two important sources of revenue—property taxes and bonds. The state permits counties to collect taxes on most **real estate** property (buildings and land). Property taxes are the most important source of county revenue. Personal property, such as automobiles and airplanes, may also be taxed. The commissioners court sets the tax rate for the county. Counties also can raise money by issuing bonds after voter approval. Bonds pay for long-term construction projects. Other sources of income for counties include fees for various permits, taxes on fuel, and fees for vehicle registration.

County budgets, drawn up by the county judge and approved by the commissioners court, address the needs of each particular county. Fast-growing counties may set aside more funds for roads and bridges. Counties with high crime rates may spend more on law enforcement, courts, and jails.

## Special Districts

**Special districts** are created to meet a specific need. They are the most numerous of all government units. School districts, rapid transit authorities, municipal utility districts, river authorities, and water control and improvement districts are all types of special districts.

**School districts** are the most common kind of special district. Each of the 1,000-plus school districts in Texas is directed by an elected board of trustees, commonly called the **school board**. The trustees have the power to select school superintendents, make school policies, hire teachers, set salaries, maintain school buildings, and provide transportation to and from schools.

Money for school districts comes from federal, state, and local funds. In the 1990s, Texas was under court order to change its method of distributing state funds to schools. The changes were intended to shift money available per student from richer school districts to poorer ones. Critics of this program called this the “Robin Hood Plan,” named after the legendary outlaw who “took from the rich and gave to the poor.”

**Community college districts** support the development of junior or community colleges. These districts have a separate board of trustees.

 **Reading Check Explaining** Where do school districts get their funding?

## SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

- Using Key Terms** Use the words **appraise** and **real estate** in one sentence that shows you understand what they mean.
- Reviewing Facts** What are the duties of the county treasurer?

### Reviewing Themes

- Government and Democracy** How does county government help the state government?

### Organizing to Learn

- Summarizing** Create a chart like the one below. List the sources of money for local government and how local governments spend the money.

Sources of Money	How Money Is Spent

### Critical Thinking

- Contrasting** How are general-law cities different from home-rule cities?
- Analyzing** Why do some cities choose to incorporate?



**Analyzing** Why can special districts often meet the needs of citizens better than a city or county government can?

# Study & Writing TAKS Skillbuilder



## Analyzing Newspaper Articles

### Why Learn This Skill?

Newspaper articles are important sources of information about today's events. In addition, they are important primary sources about the past.

News articles begin with a headline, which is a short phrase that tells the main point; a byline, which is the writer's name; and often a dateline, which tells where and when the story was written. The first paragraph is the "lead." It addresses the main topic of the article. Other paragraphs add details. The writer will often quote people who have differing views. Newswriters try to be objective, writing only facts and not their own personal opinions.

### Learning the Skill

- Read the headline, the byline, and the dateline
- Read the "lead" to determine the main topic
- Identify other important details

### Practicing the Skill

Read this article from the April 16, 2001, *New York Times*, then answer the questions.

*At a time when nearly every major city in Texas is desperate for more water to meet runaway population growth, Mr. [T. Boone] Pickens is proposing to pump tens of billions of gallons—to the highest bidder . . .*

*"Water is the lifeblood of West Texas," said Mr. Pickens, 72, who is courting Fort Worth, Dallas, San Antonio, and El Paso as potential customers and estimates that a deal could reap \$1 billion . . .*

*"For decades the gold beneath the ground in Texas was oil. But if oil built modern Texas, water is now needed to sustain it."*

*. . . "You're going to devastate a large part of the state of Texas," said Tom Beard, a rancher. He feared that arid West Texas could be pumped dry by water ranches owned by distant cities . . .*

- 1 What is the main subject of the article?
- 2 What two sources does the writer quote and what arguments do those sources make?



*Nearly dry riverbed in the Rio Grande system*



## TAKS PRACTICE

**Analyzing Newspaper Articles** Read this paragraph from the same article, and then answer the questions below.

*The political debate is complicated. Environmentalists want more conservation and tougher regulation, as opposed to new dams and aggressive pumping of groundwater. There are the competing demands of agriculture and urban areas. There are also differing needs and climates in the state's various regions . . .*

1. Identify the main issues in the paragraph.
2. Decide your view of the issue and share with the class.



Glencoe's **Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook**, Level 1, provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.



# Participation in Government

## Guide to Reading

### Main Idea

Many opportunities exist for Texans to participate in government and politics.

### Key Terms

nonpartisan election  
watchdog role  
special interest groups

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** As you read this section, complete a web to show how Texas residents can participate in government.



### Read to Learn

- about citizen participation.
- about political parties and special interest groups.
- about the election process.

### Section Theme

**Civic Rights and Responsibilities** All Texans have the right and duty to participate in government on some level.

### Preview of Events

◆ 1919

League of Women Voters of Texas forms

◆ 1929

League of United Latin American Citizens is founded



Yorktown school board, 2000

## A Texas Story



Marcus Puente received the second-highest vote total among the field of six candidates in the school board election. The University of Texas at San Antonio sophomore is now a member of the school board for Yorktown, which has 700 students from kindergarten to 12th grade. Puente, who turned 19 when elected, is one of the youngest—if not *the* youngest—school trustee in the state. By law, school board members in Texas must be at least 18.

### Democratic Principles

Both the United States and Texas were founded on the principle that citizens should govern themselves. The founders fought for and established democratic governments for the nation and the state. Today Texans have the

right and duty to support their democratic government. This right too often is taken for granted.

A democratic government is founded on three important beliefs. One is that the needs and opinions of each citizen are important. Another is that citizens have different needs, values, and experiences that government should consider if it is to serve all the people. Third, a democratic government is founded on the belief that citizens should participate in government.

## Individual Participation

Government officials perform their jobs more effectively when they know what the people want. Citizens can learn about their government from many sources. They can watch television, listen to the radio, read newspapers and magazines, and talk to their friends and neighbors. People can then express the views they formed by talking to or writing to government officials and employees. An important way to express concerns is by voting. Citizens help make many important decisions when they vote. Voters elect individuals to carry out specific government tasks. To vote in Texas elections, a person must be a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States and 18 years or older on election day. He or she must also be a resident of the state and county and be registered to vote for at least 30 days before election day.

Many people are involved in government through volunteer work, an important activity in which citizens can make a difference. Volunteers read to young children at public libraries, help in city cleanup campaigns, answer phones at crisis hot lines, and volunteer in political campaigns.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** How is voting an expression of individual participation in government?

## Running for Political Office

Any Texan who wants to serve as an elected official must campaign to win voter support. Campaigns are excellent opportunities for candidates and voters to express their opinions and concerns. Some officials in government receive salaries, while others donate their time to help

meet the needs of other citizens. While serving as state treasurer, Ann Richards spoke about citizens becoming involved:

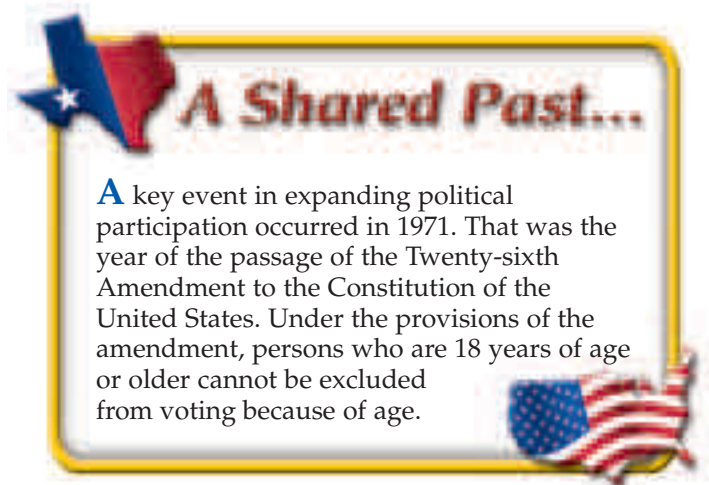
“People come up to me and want me to teach them what I know. As if what I know is something in that great magical beyond. It is nothing more than establishing a goal, taking the risk to go after that goal, and putting the money together to pay for it.”

## Political Parties in Texas

Voting is one of the most important ways to participate in a democracy. The chart on page 664 describes the four types of elections that take place in Texas—**primary elections**, **general elections**, **special elections**, and **local elections**. In **nonpartisan elections**, candidates are not identified by any particular party.

One of the most important ways citizens can affect government decision making is by taking part in **political parties**. The ideas and actions of each individual citizen are important. Today there are many opportunities for citizens to become involved and to influence government.

Political parties serve several functions. One of the most important is to nominate people to run for public office. Political parties campaign for their candidates both in general elections and in special elections. They encourage volunteers to campaign, to participate in party activities, and to conduct voter registration drives.



Once elections have been held, political parties play an important part in organizing government. Political parties help to staff the government by recommending qualified candidates for positions that need to be filled.

The parties work to unite government leaders so they can better carry out their duties. Members of Congress who belong to the same party meet regularly to choose leaders and to decide new policy strategies. They discuss common problems and possible plans of action.

Another activity of political parties is to monitor, or keep track of, other parties. This is called the **watchdog role**. Each party tries to keep informed about the work of others, reporting practices or decisions with which it disagrees. This process helps to keep the citizens informed.

Until recently, the **Democratic Party** was dominant in Texas. Now both the **Republican Party** and the Democratic Party compete for voter support. Texans benefit from having active political parties. The parties work hard to recruit good candidates and to publicize important issues. The political parties also encourage citizens to participate in campaigns and elections. In addition to the Democratic and Republican Parties, other parties have appeared on Texas ballots in recent years, including the Reform Party, Libertarian Party, and the Green Party.

 **Reading Check** **Summarizing** What are the roles of political parties?

## Special Interest Groups

**Special interest groups** (SIGs) are organizations of people who share a common interest and seek to exert influence over a particular aspect of government. SIGs might be formed to promote a particular industry, or to influence a particular political matter like civil rights for minorities or environmental protection.

Although SIGs are similar to political parties, their focus is generally narrower and more specific. Another important difference between SIGs and political parties has to do with their activities. One of the main functions of political parties is to nominate and elect

## Types of Elections and What You Should Know About Them

<b>Primary elections</b>	Candidates from the same political party compete against each other. Each party's primary winner runs in the general election.
<b>General elections</b>	Held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November in even-numbered years Voters elect government leaders at the national and state levels. Statewide officials are elected in nonpresidential years. Citizens may be asked to vote on proposed laws or special issues.
<b>Special elections</b>	Held to fill vacancies in the Texas legislature or the U.S. Congress Held to approve local bond proposals, taxes, and constitutional amendments Held to fill vacancies of city councils, school boards, and community college boards
<b>Local elections</b>	Held to elect city council members, mayors, school board members, and special district boards; usually nonpartisan



## TAKS PRACTICE

**Identifying** Elections are a very important part of the democratic process. Citizens express their opinions about candidates and issues through their votes. *Name the school board members who were most recently elected in your school district.*

candidates to office. Although SIGs may support candidates, their main goal is to influence public officials.

People are motivated to join SIGs if they think there is a potential benefit. For example, labor groups work to advance their rights or increase wages. Racial and ethnic groups promote political, economic, and social equality for their members.

Political interest groups focus on a variety of issues. Women's groups, such as the **Texas League of Women Voters**, founded in 1919, publish reliable voter information. Religious groups promote government policies in agreement with their beliefs. Groups like the Sierra Club seek to achieve and maintain clean air and water. The oldest and largest Hispanic group, the **League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)**, founded in 1929, has worked hard to ensure social justice and equal educational opportunities for Latinos. The **NAACP Texas State Conference** formed in 1937 to help its local branches continue their work in registering African American voters and working for civil rights legislation.



### Exploring Government

These citizens met at the State Capitol to lobby against a motorcycle helmet law. [How else can citizens show their support or opposition to a bill or law?](#)

## Directly Influencing Government

An important way interest groups work toward their goals is by electing government leaders whose views agree with their own. Interest groups may recruit or encourage particular candidates, publicly endorse candidates, contribute money to campaigns, or encourage members to serve as campaign volunteers.

Interest groups also work for their goals by gaining public support. They may purchase advertisements on radio and television and in magazines and newspapers. Interest groups might hold public events to make their point

and shape public opinion. Another way interest groups work toward their goals is through lobbying, trying to persuade government leaders to favor a certain cause. **Lobbyists** may appear before legislative committees, testify in court hearings, and visit legislators and other officials. Some interest groups hire professional lobbyists. In other groups, members volunteer. Any lobbyist who spends a certain amount of time or money must register with the secretary of state, and all lobbyists must follow certain regulations.

**Reading Check** **Identifying** What is a lobbyist?

## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

- Using Key Terms** Write a sentence for each of the following terms: **nonpartisan**, **watchdog role**, **special interest group**.
- Reviewing Facts** When are general elections held?

### Reviewing Themes

- Civic Rights and Responsibilities** On which three important beliefs is a democratic government founded?

### Organizing to Learn

- Categorizing** Create a chart like the one shown here and fill in the blanks to show the purpose of each type of election (why it is held).

Type of Election	Purpose
Primary	
General	
Special	
Local	

### Critical Thinking

- Drawing Inferences** Why do we consider voting not just a right but also a duty?
- Evaluating** Why would lobbyists need to register with the secretary of state?

**TAKS PRACTICE**

**Analyzing** Write a paragraph that describes the role of a lobbyist.

## Chapter Summary

### Local Government

#### Types of Cities

- General-law
- Home-rule

#### Types of City Governments

- Mayor-council
  - strong-mayor city
  - weak-mayor city
- Council-manager
- Commission

#### Sources of Revenue for Cities and Counties

- Taxes
- Fees
- Bonds
- State government
- Federal government

#### Types of Special Districts

- School districts
- Water districts
- Transportation districts

#### Types of Elections

- Primary elections
- General elections
- Special elections
- Local elections

#### Types of Political Groups

- Volunteer groups
- Political parties
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

#### Reviewing Key Terms

Choose from the following words to fill in the blanks in the three spaces below: *appraise, nonpartisan, special interest group, bonds, ordinance, commissioners court.*

1. Local governments often receive funding from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Elections for local government offices usually are \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Tax assessors \_\_\_\_\_ property.

#### Reviewing Key Facts

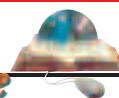
4. Describe the differences between the council-manager, mayor-council (strong and weak), and commission forms of city governments.
5. What conditions must be met in order for a person to be allowed to vote in elections in Texas?
6. How is county government financed other than by property taxes and bonds?
7. List three functions of political parties.
8. Name three political parties other than the Democratic and Republican Parties.

#### Critical Thinking

9. **Identifying Options** Create a web like the one shown below. Give two reasons why you would participate in your local or state government.



10. **Civic Rights and Responsibilities** Imagine if junior high schools in Texas required that all students put in a certain number of volunteer hours working for the party of their choice before and during elections. How might that affect the way that those students understand the democratic process?
11. **Comparing and Contrasting** Explain the differences between a political party and a special interest group. What do you think would happen if every special interest group became a political party?
12. **Understanding Democracy** Would there be any benefits if special interest groups (SIGs) were eliminated from political life? In what ways might it be helpful? In what ways might it be harmful?



**Self-Check Quiz**

Visit the [texans.glencoe.com](http://texans.glencoe.com) Web site and click on **Chapter 30—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

**CLICK HERE**



**Geography and History Activity**

Research and answer the following questions.

- Where would you find a copy of your birth certificate? (Name the building and/or address.)
- What is the name of your local school district, and where is the district office located? (Name the building and/or address.)



**Portfolio/TAKS Writing Activity**

- Identifying Options** Reflect on the ideas and information presented in the chapter. Imagine that you are running for the school board of your local school district. You have some very strong opinions and ideas about what is working well in the schools and what needs to be changed. Write a paragraph that summarizes your ideas. Keep your campaign promises realistic yet optimistic. Save your work for your portfolio.

**Citizenship and History Activity**

- Researching a Current Issue** Choose a special district that interests you, such as a water district or soil conservation district. Use the Internet or go in person to the special district office to collect information about a current issue under discussion in the district. Write a one-page paper on your findings.



**Building Technology Skills**

- Using the Internet or Library for Research** Work with another student to research one of the special interest groups (SIGs) that represents a concern presented in *Texas and Texans*. Choose a special interest topic such as civil rights, environmental protection, the oil industry, the beef or dairy industry. Focus on explaining the SIG's purpose—why it was formed in the first place—and the advertising and lobbying strategies it uses to make its concerns heard. After you have completed your research, develop a multimedia presentation. Share your presentation with the rest of the class.

**Practicing Skills**

- Analyzing Newspaper Articles** Find a newspaper article that interests you. Read the headline, byline, and dateline. Determine the main topic. Distinguish different views on the topic. Identify any other important details. Summarize the article in your own words.

**Government and History Activity**

- Attending a City Council Meeting** As a citizen and resident of a town or city and county in Texas, you have the opportunity to participate in local government. Attend a city council meeting or, if you do not live in a city, attend a county commissioners meeting. Some cities broadcast the council meetings on local cable TV channels. Take notes on the meeting or pick up an agenda. Write a paragraph about your observations.

**Cooperative Learning Activity**

- Identifying Local Issues** Working in groups of four, identify and follow a current local issue or problem that affects your town or Texas by reading about it in the newspaper, watching local TV news, and talking to friends and neighbors. Evaluate the possible solutions that are being offered by officials and the public in general. Create an oral and visual presentation for the rest of the class featuring videotaped news clips, newspaper articles, or interviews with people you spoke to.



Use the information in this chapter to answer the following question.

Which of the following is the responsibility of your local government?

- F Running the public schools
- G Building roads
- H Publishing the local newspaper
- J Creating and passing state laws

**Test-Taking Tip:**

Read the question and answer choices carefully. Try to eliminate obviously wrong choices first.

