

Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners

INSIDE THE COURTHOUSE

Illinois Property Assessment Institute State Conference • March 23, 2026 • Normal, Illinois



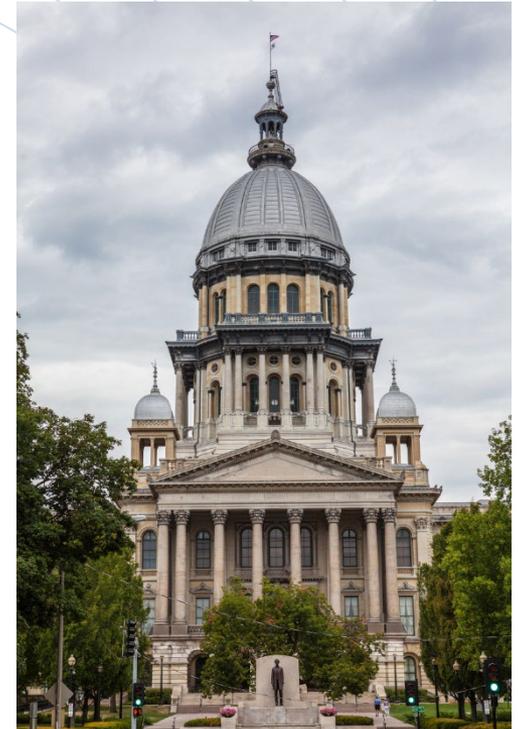
Introduction

Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners

The Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners (IACBM) is a not-for-profit organization that assist the state's 102 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Illinois.

With its office conveniently located near the State Capitol in Springfield, IACBM provides county officials a means to congregate, educate and advocate their interests before the state government.

The non-partisan association is governed by a Board of Directors composed of one representative from each county in good standing.



Constitutional Provisions

Inside the Courthouse

The Illinois Constitution mandates that a county board be elected in each county.

Therefore, the office of county board member cannot be eliminated by referendum, as the office is mandated by constitution.

The number of members of the county board shall be fixed by ordinance in each county within limitations provided by law. The Illinois Supreme Court, by giving the county board power to determine its size, prevents county voters from changing the number of members of the county board by referendum. **Provides an exception for commission counties.*



Constitutional Provisions

Inside the Courthouse

The General Assembly by law provides methods available to all counties for election of board members. No county other than Cook County, may change its method of electing board members except as approved by county-wide referendum.

The Cook County Board President shall be elected from the County at large and shall be the chief executive officer.

For counties under township organization, the Counties Code provides for apportioning county board seats and sets the minimum and maximum number of seats on a county board. The few counties not under township organization each elect three to five commissioners.



Organization by Statute

Inside the Courthouse

The Illinois General Assembly has provided for three kinds of counties:

- Counties under a commission form
- Counties under township organization
- Counties under an executive form of government

There are currently 17 counties operating under the commission form of county government:

- Alexander County
- Calhoun County
- Edwards County
- Hardin County
- Johnson County
- Massac County
- Menard County
- Monroe County
- Morgan County
- Perry County
- Pope County
- Pulaski County
- Randolph County
- Scott County
- Union County
- Wabash County
- Williamson County



Commission Form

Inside the Courthouse

The commission form of government is the oldest and the most traditional county organizational structure.

Under the commission form, the county governing body consists of an elected board composed of 3 or 5 commissioners who serve as the legislative body and they also perform executive functions. No single administrator or executive oversees a county's operations under the commission form of government.

At each general election, one commissioner shall be elected to serve for a term of six years; others shall serve for a term of four years.



County Board Districts

Inside the Courthouse

Illinois County Governments • Commission Form

| COUNTY | MEMBERS |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Alexander | Commissioners – 3 |
| Calhoun | Commissioners – 5 |
| Edwards | Commissioners – 3 |
| Hardin | Commissioners – 3 |
| Johnson | Commissioners – 3 |
| Massac | Commissioners – 3 |
| Menard | Commissioners – 5 |
| Monroe | Commissioners – 3 |
| Morgan | Commissioners – 3 |

| COUNTY | MEMBERS |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Perry | Commissioners – 3 |
| Pope | Commissioners – 3 |
| Pulaski | Commissioners – 3 |
| Randolph | Commissioners – 3 |
| Scott | Commissioners – 3 |
| Union | Commissioners – 5 |
| Wabash | Commissioners – 3 |
| Williamson | Commissioners – 3 |
| COUNTIES: 17 | Commissioners: 57 |

Comparison: Sangamon County (29) / St. Clair County (29) = 58 Members



Commissioners Compensation

Inside the Courthouse

Each year at their December meeting, the commissioners select one of themselves as chairperson, most often alternating the designation.

County Commissioners receive an annual salary fixed by the board which cannot be greater than the annual salary paid to the county clerk. Commissioners are entitled to travel and expense allowances as determined by the board.

Before per diem, travel or other expenses, other than board meetings, a report stating the nature of the expense must be filed and appear on the minutes of the meeting at which they were approved.



Township Form

Inside the Courthouse

The Illinois Constitution of 1848 allowed voters in each county to choose to establish township governments or a commission form of government.

Today, 85 of the 102 counties in Illinois operate under the township form of government.

Township counties usually operate with standing committees. These committees' study particular problems that arise within their areas of responsibility and submit recommendations to the full board for action.

A county board member can also hold the office of township supervisor.



Executive Form

Inside the Courthouse



A county which has a chief executive officer is considered a “home rule” unit.

A county-wide referendum is required to establish this plan. Home rule counties have broader authority. The advantage of this designation is that, except as limited by State law, home rule counties may exercise any power and perform any function relating to its government and affairs, including the power to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals and welfare; to license; and to borrow money and levy taxes.

Cook County is the only home rule county in Illinois. Will County voters elected to go to a county executive form without home rule in 1988. Champaign County voters approved restructure to executive form in 2016.



County Board Districts

Inside the Courthouse

Voters can establish whether county board members will be selected at large, from single member, or multi-member districts. However, the number of members and the number of districts is decided by the county board, not the voters.

| COUNTY | POPULATION | DISTRICTS | MEMBERS |
|------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Adams | 64,754 | Multiple Districts (7) | Board Members – 21 |
| Cook | 5,182,090 | Single Districts (17) | Board Members – 17 |
| Effingham | 34,522 | Single Districts (9) | Board Members – 9 |
| Grundy | 53,219 | Multiple Districts (3) | Board Members – 18 |
| Lake | 714,223 | Single Districts (19) | Board Members – 19 |
| Marshall | 11,647 | Multiple Districts (3) | Board Members – 12 |
| McLean | 171,556 | Multiple Districts (10) | Board Members – 20 |
| Montgomery | 27,663 | Multiple Districts (7) | Board Members – 14 |
| Ogle | 51,495 | Multiple Districts (8) | Board Members – 24 |
| Sangamon | 194,947 | Single Districts (29) | Board Members – 29 |

Primary Governing Duties

Inside the Courthouse

The county board is both the legislative and executive branch of county government.

As a legislative body, the county board enacts ordinances and resolutions that can apply either to the county as a region, including the cities within it, or specifically to the unincorporated area of the county.

As an executive body, the county board administers the activities of various county departments and offices, except those headed by other elected county officials.

As the governing body, the county board adopts an annual budget for the county, establishes tax rates, and authorizes bond issues, subject to voter approval.



Primary Governing Duties

Inside the Courthouse

In a quasi-judicial role, the county board reviews zoning, planning and land use matters and considers appeals in granting or denying certain permits and licenses.

The county board is also empowered to establish and control special districts to provide services in unincorporated areas of the county. In order to effectively supervise operations of the county, the board elects a chair from its membership who serves as the head of the county government.

The chairperson facilitates the operations of the county board and the other departments of the county.



Committee Structure

Inside the Courthouse

Most county boards are organized into committees with members appointed by the chairperson. This allows each member to develop greater expertise on a set of issues than would be possible if the whole board dealt with all the details.

How the committees are organized and how members are assigned to them varies depending upon the size of the board and the form of the county government.

In most instances, the chair of each committee reports to the full board on the operations of the departments with which they deal.



Committee Structure

Inside the Courthouse

Some of the more standard county government committees include:

- **Committee of the Whole** is responsible for matters pertaining to leadership, strategic planning and the County Administrator's report, if applicable.
- **Executive Committee** acts in an advisory capacity to all standing committees and is usually composed of the chair of all committees. It oversees matters concerning the coordination and operation of the county's programs and policies.
- **Environmental Committee** addresses matters concerning climate change, environmental health, wind/solar, recycling and the County's carbon footprint.
- **Finance Committee** provides oversight responsibilities for budgeting, financial reporting, internal control systems, and audit processes.

Committee Structure

Inside the Courthouse

Some of the more standard county government committees include:

- **Judicial and Public Safety Committee** considers all matters concerning the operations of the justice system in the county, including civil and criminal courts, law enforcement, corrections facilities, and emergency management.
- **Land Use Committee** recommends and enforces the county's zoning ordinances and regulations.
- **Legislative Committee** monitors, reviews and recommends positions on state and federal legislation impacting local governments.
- **Transportation Committee** reviews all matters that involve the construction of county highways, including maintenance of road and bridge system.

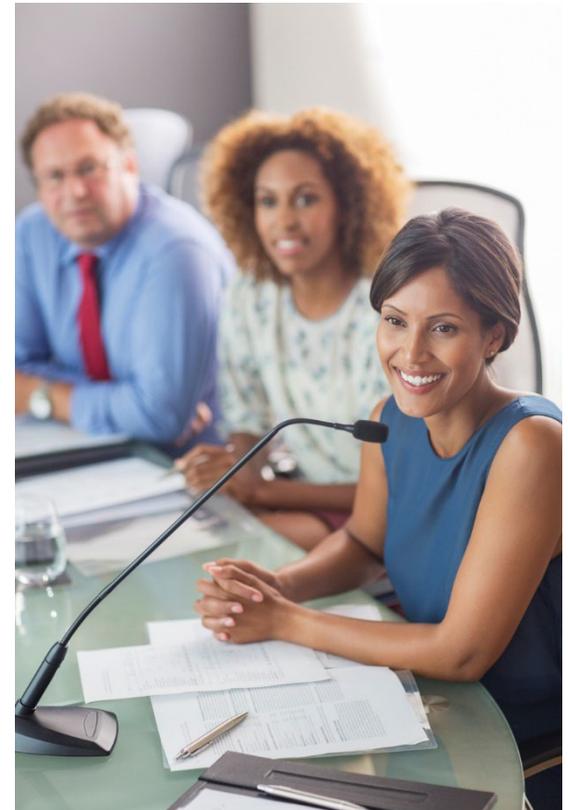


Committee Structure

Inside the Courthouse

Special or temporary committees may include:

- Animal Services Committee
- Broadband and Infrastructure Committee
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
- Economic Development Committee
- Health and Human Services Committee
- Intergovernmental Committee
- Public Works Committee
- Rules Committee
- Stormwater Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee
- Technology Committee



Qualifications

Inside the Courthouse



The office of county board member and commissioner is open to lay persons.

Because of the extent of control which a county board exercises and the diversity of responsibilities associated with the office, board members must remain alert to all issues relative to the county and local governments.

Board members must continually review state and federal laws, legislation, technology, policies, and procedures to increase the effectiveness of the county. Board members need to have a clear understanding of the Illinois Constitution, the Counties Code, the Illinois Open Meetings Act, the Illinois Freedom Information Act, the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, and working knowledge of parliamentary procedure (rules of order).



Major Functions

Inside the Courthouse



Counties' governmental and service functions are broken into two broad categories:

- Mandatory Functions are essential services that counties are required by law to provide; and
- Discretionary Functions are optional services that county officials may choose to provide based on policy priorities and budget allocations.

Reporters are a conduit to the public at large. County board members should develop a professional relationship with the local media to keep citizens informed of decisions.

It is important for local governments to advance into a digital world to better provide accessible, efficient and transparent public services.

The second category is much more extensive than the first.



Mandatory Functions

Inside the Courthouse

- **Elect a chairperson to conduct meetings, properly publish and hold meetings at prescribed times, and publish a report of each meeting.**

The Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) ensures that meetings of public bodies are open to the public, except in specific situations where the law permits closure.



A public body must make minutes of the meeting available for public inspection and post them on the public body's website (if it has one) within 10 calendar days after the minutes are approved by the public body. Typically, the minutes are approved at the next board meeting.

Mandatory Functions

Inside the Courthouse

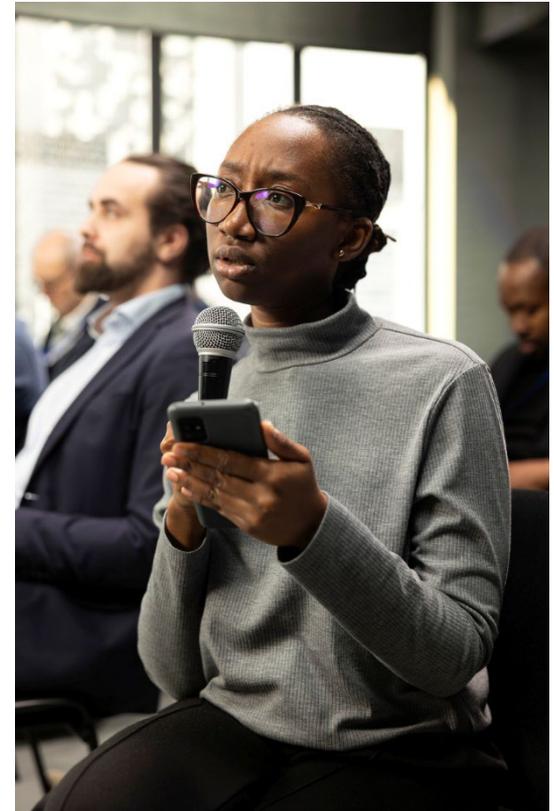
OPEN MEETINGS ACT (5 ILCS 120/2.05)

Sec. 2.05. Recording meetings.

Subject to the provisions of Section 8-701 of the Code of Civil Procedure, any person may record the proceedings at meetings required to be open by this Act by tape, film or other means.

The authority holding the meeting shall prescribe reasonable rules to govern the right to make such recordings.

** Exceptions are allowed for witness testimony.*



Mandatory Functions

Inside the Courthouse



- **Adopt an annual budget that appropriates funds to cover expenditures for various county offices and functions.**

The county board has broad discretion in deciding the amount of funds to be appropriated and by whom they will be spent.

Included in the overall budgeting responsibility is the obligation to prepare an annual financial report. Many counties continue to operate under a December 1 to November 30 fiscal year – this was the original fiscal year set forth by the 1933 County Budget Act.

If the county board determines, after the adoption of its annual budget and pursuant to a two-thirds vote of its members, that revenues will be less than initially projected, it may adopt an amended budget (also by a two-thirds vote) at any time during that fiscal year.



Mandatory Functions

Inside the Courthouse

- **Furnish space, fixtures, fittings and other necessary equipment for county offices.**

This includes providing a courthouse, a jail, and other buildings necessary for the operation of the courts and other county administrative offices.



- **Evaluate all claims made on county funds and prosecute or defend lawsuits brought by or against the county and any officers thereof.**

In the event a lawsuit results in a judgment against the county or one of its officers, the board or commission is responsible for paying any damages awarded by the court.



Management Functions

Inside the Courthouse



Powers of the county board include:

- Purchase and hold the real and personal estate necessary for uses of the county; including real estate.
- Sell and convey or lease any real or personal estate owned by the county.
- Make all contracts in relation to property and concerns of the county.
- Enforce all laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals.
- Purchase and hold or lease real estate for agriculture experiments.
- Cause to be erected or provide a suitable building and maintain a county hospital, sheltered care home or county nursing home.



Management Functions

Inside the Courthouse



- Preservation of forests, prairies, birds and other natural areas and historical spots in the county.
- Prevention of forest fires; planting of trees (preservation).
- Regulate and fix the days of opening and closing of county offices; except as otherwise fixed by law.
- Take all necessary steps for the extermination of mosquitoes or other insects.
- Install an adequate system of accounts and financial records in the county offices.
- Construct and maintain motor vehicle parking facilities for county buildings.
- Economic development functions and telecommunications purposes (broadband).



Discretionary Functions

Inside the Courthouse



- May oversee the care and custody of county-owned property, including museums, animal control facilities, waste treatment plants, recreational facilities and sanitary landfills.
- May assume general management responsibility for obtaining and administering federal funds, for levying and collecting taxes on real property and on the sale of goods and services, and for issuing bonds to provide funds for acquisition or construction of capital equipment projects.
- Have broad discretionary authority in the areas of public and environmental health and safety. The county board may act as a board of health or establish a health department; provide for various emergency services; make available clinics, hospitals and shelters; and engage in environmental health activities.



Discretionary Functions

Inside the Courthouse

- May engage in land use planning and zoning, including participating in regional planning, and may regulate in the areas of building and safety codes, building permits, and subdivisions regulations.
- May provide employment procedures, personnel policies, maintenance of property record system, business and economic development, and various types of insurance.
- May provide public parks and open spaces, museums, historic preservation activities, county fairs, and funding of soil and crop improvement associations.



Discretionary Functions

Inside the Courthouse

- May provide social services, including making grants to community action agencies and providing services for youth, the aging, the mentally deficient, and neglected or delinquent children. **Some counties in Illinois also have general oversight for the distribution of funds respective to established veterans' assistance agencies or commissions.**
- Have some authority to engage in emergency services planning, to provide ambulance services, to provide for police and fire communication systems, and to work closely with other public agencies in the provision of emergency services.



Discretionary Functions

Inside the Courthouse

- Have extensive power to provide for the construction of highways, roads, bridges, lighting, culverts, etc.; to organize county unit road districts; to establish a road naming or numbering system; to construct and operate parking facilities.

Illinois county governments may also operate an airport.

- May support the local elections authority with regards to all aspects of the election process: voter registration, fixing election districts and polling places, appointing election judges, providing for balloting boxes, including vote-by-mail ballots and secure drop box locations.



In Conclusion

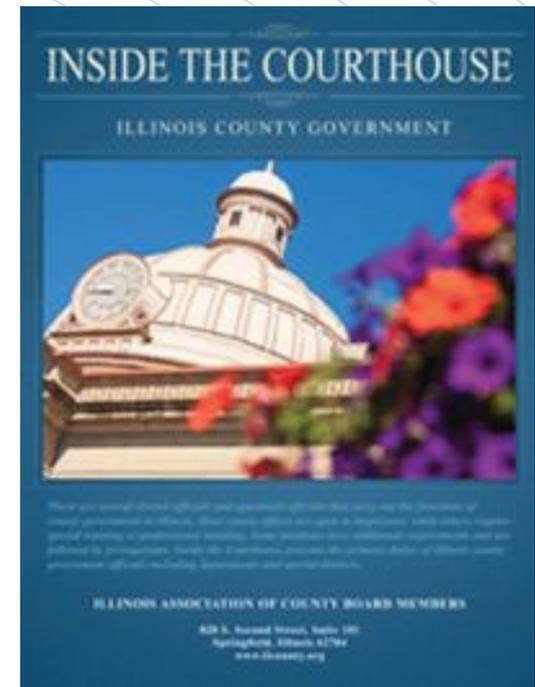
Inside the Courthouse

There are several elected officials and appointed officials that carry out the functions of county government in Illinois.

Most offices are open to laypersons, while others require special training or professional standing.

Some positions have additional requirements and are followed by prerequisites.

Inside the Courthouse presents the primary duties of Illinois county government officials including departments and special districts.



**DOWNLOAD AT
ilcounty.org**

Publications

IACBM continuously publishes newsletters, legislative reports and research briefs on issues of interest to local government officials.

Association members can sign up to receive the reports. Just email ilcounty@gmail.com.

**Exclusive to Illinois county government officials and associate members.*

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS
COUNTY BULLETIN
OCTOBER 2021

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS
Counties at the Capitol
November 1, 2019 • www.ilcounty.org

This report includes actions taken by the Illinois General Assembly during the first week of the Veto Session.

Senate Republicans introduce legislation to ensure independent investigations of ethics violations

At a press conference in the Capitol's blue room on October 30, members of the Senate Republican Caucus unveiled a legislative proposal to ensure independent investigations of members of the General Assembly.



Sen. Jason Bankman (R-Bloomington) filed Senate Bill 2297, which gives the Legislative Inspector General (LIG) the appropriate tools, which the current LIG has suggested, to conduct independent investigations of legislators.

Currently, except in cases alleging sexual harassment, the LIG must get advance approval from the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC) before opening an investigation, or issuing subpoenas. Additionally if, during the investigation, the LIG discovers wrongdoing that is beyond the scope of, or unrelated to the initial complaint, they have to go back to the LEC to get approval to investigate further.

Under SB 2297, the LIG would be able to investigate complaints against legislators and issue subpoenas without approval from the LEC. By taking legislators out of the process, the bill ensures independence in the investigation of these claims.

NOTE: Lawmakers from both parties have put forward ethics reforms in the wake of recent federal probes of public corruption involving prominent Chicago-area lawmakers. On Tuesday, House Speaker Michael Madigan authorized a six-member investigative committee, made up of equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans, to specifically look into the allegations against Rep. Luis Arroyo (D-Chicago).

BAN ON PUBLIC USE OF E-CIGARETTES

A measure sponsored by Sen. Terry Link (D-Indian Creek) that would ban public consumption of e-cigarettes passed the Senate on Tuesday in a 41-11 vote and will now go before the Illinois House. Senate Bill 1854 expands the Smoke Free Illinois Act by prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products in public places, places of employment and within 15 feet of building entrances.



According to the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention, there have been more than 1,000 cases of vaping-related ailments reported, including 34 deaths across 24 states.

The measure could also help curb youth-e-cigarette use. The recently released 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that e-cigarette use among high school students increased by 78% from 2017 to 2018. In total, 20.8% of all high school students use e-cigarettes.

Lake County child advocacy pilot program

To
Chair
Child
juror
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Board
Governor
by R

NEW LAWS SUMMARY

102nd Illinois General Assembly • 2022

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMISSIONERS
828 S. Second Street, Suite 101 • Springfield, Illinois 62704
ilcounty.org

Illinois Association of County Board Members
Insight Website Transparency

Developments in technology have changed the landscape of record-keeping and public information. Citizens come to expect instantaneous and consistent access to all kinds of information. Public officials are expected to provide significant data online and increasingly, however, some offices and counties are still outdated with cost and maintenance issues. Record-keeping efforts are often in increasing transparency, from their objectives to their, and address your county's website transparency to be able to answer to state staff.

When it comes to open government information, transparency is a two-way street. The public has a right to know what the government is doing, but the government also has a right to know what the public is doing. This is why it is important for public officials to be transparent about their actions and decisions. This report provides a comprehensive overview of website transparency and offers practical advice on how to improve your county's website transparency.

Questions



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