

## History of County Government



The role of county government as an administrative arm of the state and a unit of self government can be traced as far back as 603 A.D. to an area in southern England that was divided by a king into territories which became known as "shires". *(At left, newly renovated Portage County Court House.)*

Shires were controlled by the monarchy through the appointment of a governing official. The term shire was used in England until the fifteenth century when the term "county" was adopted. Since the county was the chief administrative area, the concept of local control and responsiveness to the people became a basic principle of English heritage.

County government evolved in England over several centuries and was brought to the United States with the English colonizers. American independence fostered numerous changes to American government, including the strengthening of state governments and more defined county roles. Today there are 3,139 county-type governments in the United States.

### County Government in Ohio

The Ohio Constitution specifies the organization of county government and all Ohio counties, with the exception of Summit County, follow the same statutory form of government consisting of three county commissioners and one of each of the following officials: county Auditor, county Clerk of Courts, county Coroner, county Engineer, county Prosecutor, county Recorder, county Sheriff and county Treasurer.

In 1979, the electors of Summit County adopted a charter that replaced the statutory three-member board of county commissioners with an elected county executive and seven-member county council. All other elected officials remained the same.

County officials are elected in even numbered years to four-year terms with the exception of judges, who have six-year terms. Common pleas, probate and county court judges are established by statute pursuant to authority granted by the Ohio Constitution.

The Board of County Commissioners consists of three members who serve staggered terms. Two county commissioners are elected in an even numbered year, and the third commissioner is elected two years later. Compensation for all county elected officials is set by the Ohio General Assembly and varies with the population of the county.

### Portage County Government

Political subdivisions in Portage County include \*5 cities, 7 villages and 18 townships.

\*Includes a small portion of the City of Tallmadge.

### Portage County Government - Administration

Portage County Board of Commissioners

#### Overview

The Board of County Commissioners consists of three members who serve staggered terms. Two county commissioners are elected in an even numbered year, and the third commissioner is elected two years later.

The commissioners' office acts as the liaison between almost every department of the entire county, including the courts, outside agencies and community service organizations. The commissioners fiscally oversee the General Fund Budget of the county and are the appropriating authority for all county tax dollars.

Each county elected official is charged to perform the duties of their individual elected office, but the Board of County Commissioners performs administrative and fiscal duties that coordinate total county operations. There are 23 departments that fall under the direct jurisdiction of the Board of Commissioners.

The Board of County Commissioners is responsible for the construction and maintenance of county owned property, which includes many public facilities such as the new Portage County Nursing Home, which opened in 2001. The anchor facility for the Portage County Seniors Complex at Robinson Memorial Hospital features two stories of resident rooms and a full basement for state-of-the-art service and support for its occupants.



Pictured above on left, new county engineer's facility. At right, new water resources lab on Infirmiry Road

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:**

Charles W. Keiper II  
 Christopher Smeiles  
 Maureen T. Frederick

**Auditor:** Janet Esposito  
 Phone: 330-297-3561

**Clerk of Courts:** Linda Fankhauser  
 Phone: 330-297-3450

**Coroner:** Dr. Roger Marcial, MD, FAAFP  
 330-297-3444 or 330-298-2060

**Engineer:** Mickey Marozzi  
 330-296-6411

**Prosecutor:** Victor Vigluicci  
 330-297-3850

**Recorder:** Bonnie Howe  
 330-297-3553

**Sheriff:** Duane Kaley  
 330-297-3889

**Treasurer:** Steve Shanafelt  
 330-297-3586

**PORTAGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

203 WEST MAIN ST  
 RAVENNA, OHIO 44266

**Court of Common Pleas**

General Division  
 Judge Laurie J. Pittman  
 330-297-3858  
 Judge John A. Enlow  
 330-297-3866

Domestic Relations  
 Judge Joseph Giulitto  
 330-297-3880

Probate Division  
 Judge Thomas J. Carnes  
 330-297-3870

Juvenile Division  
 Judge Thomas J. Carnes  
 8000 Infirmiry Road  
 Ravenna, OH 44266  
 330-297-0881

**Municipal Court – Ravenna**

**Division** Judge Barbara R. Watson  
 330-297-4277  
 Judge Barbara Oswick  
 330-297-3632

**Municipal Court – Kent Division**

Judge John J. Plough  
 214 S. Water St., Kent, OH 44240  
 330-678-6170

For more detailed information about Portage County elected officials, departments, boards and commissions, visit <http://www.co.portage.oh.us>

For more information, contact:  
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 Ravenna, Ohio 44266-1217  
 Phone: (330) 297-3600 Fax: (330) 297-3610  
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