

What Elected Offices are on the 2009 Kids Voting ballot?

Kids Voting has compiled some information for students voting in the E-Vote! Elections for 2009. Sources for the following information and websites where you can find more info are included.

City Council Members

This information is from **Cities 101** developed by the **National League of Cities** to introduce and explain municipal government in the United States. www.nlc.org

AT-LARGE, DISTRICT AND MIXED-SYSTEM ELECTIONS

Elections for city council members are based on constituencies for city council members – members at-large, members elected by a portion of the city, or a mix of the two.

At-Large

All at large members are elected to serve the same constituency -- the population of the city as a whole. At-large election proponents favor having council members elected by the entire city because:

- Council members in an at-large system can be more impartial, rise above the limited perspective of the ward and concern themselves with the problems of the whole community;
- Vote trading and logrolling are minimized; and
- Better-qualified individuals are elected to the council (broader base of candidates).
- However, at-large elections can weaken the representation of particular groups, especially if the group does not have a citywide base of operation or is an ethnic/racial group concentrated in a specific ward.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all municipalities use at-large elections in some way. At-large elections tend to be more popular in small cities and more affluent areas.

District

District elections select a single council member from a geographical section of the city, or ward. District election proponents favor having council members elected to represent individual wards because:

- District elections give all legitimate groups, especially those with a geographic base, a better chance of being represented on the city council (namely minority groups);
- Ward council members are more sensitive to the small but frequently important problems that people have (i.e.: needed stop signs, trash pick up); and
- District elections reduce voter alienation by bringing city government closer to the people.

However, councils elected by district elections may experience more conflict and be less efficient because of local vs. citywide perspectives. Only 14% of all municipalities use strictly district elections. Cities with populations of 200,000 or more are more likely to use district elections.

Mixed-System

Some cities combine these two methods and elect some council members at large and some from districts (21% of municipalities use this approach). An individual council member will either occupy a district or at-large seat on the council. Mixed systems are most likely to be found in parts of the south and central city jurisdictions.

Some courts have forced municipalities to switch from at-large elections to district elections to allow more representation by specific ethnic/racial groups (see amendments to the U.S. Voting Rights Act, 1982).

Additional Information and a Question

City Council Member - City Council is the legislative branch of the city. Its members have the responsibility of approving city spending, some contracts, and enacting the city laws. In addition to its money control and regulatory authority, City Council establishes policies on the uses of land in the city limits.

Q: How are council members elected in your city?

Village Government/Trustees or Councils

The Ohio constitution classifies municipal corporations of less than 5,000 people as villages. Just like a city, a village has the authority to exercise all powers of local self-government and to adopt and enforce within their limits local police, sanitary and other similar regulations, that are not in conflict with general laws of the state.

Township Government/Trustees

Information from the Ohio Township Association www.cpmra.muohio.edu/otaohio/

Townships

In Ohio, the township predates our state government. The townships' size and shape were determined by the Congressional Acts which that established various land grants. Within the Ohio land grants, Congress set aside sections of the land for the use of schools and the support of religious institutions.

As the Ohio Territory became populated, the surveyed townships became the basic unit of local government. A township treasurer and assessor were later added. In the early years of statehood, Ohio township government cared for the poor, maintained the roads, preserved the peace, registered brands and fulfilled the needs of local government generally.

Today, just as in 1804, the township in Ohio is a political subdivision of the state. As such, it has only those powers granted to it by the state legislature and performs functions defined by the state. To keep pace with the demands of changing time, the functions, duties and obligations of the township have changed over the years. Demands for increased or different services have prompted the state legislature to grant Ohio's 1309 townships the authority to fulfill these changing demands.

Find most Ohio townships at www.cpmra.muohio.edu/otaohio/Membership/websites.html

Trustees

Three trustees and a clerk, each elected for a four-year term, administer each of our townships today. Officially they fill their offices on a part-time basis, but they are always ready to meet their responsibilities and put in many hours of work to serve their constituents. Supporters believe their intimate knowledge of their community, its needs, and its citizens enables them to offer more personal service than any other unit of government.

Q: Do you live in a city, a village or a township?

School Boards/Board of Education

Information from the Ohio School Board Association www.osba-ohio.org/

The men and women elected to represent their communities on Ohio's school boards provide valuable leadership to public schools.

The Board hires the Superintendent to provide educational leadership and implement policies and procedures through the administrative, teaching and support staffs (from the Upper Arlington Board of Education website). It also employs a Treasurer who serves as the District's chief fiscal officer. The board members have three main duties. First, the board makes the policies for the local school district. Second, it provides supervision for the operation of local school system. Third, the school board provides leadership and represents the interest of the community on public education issues.

A school board sets educational goals and establishes policy for the school system based upon state laws and community values. Perhaps the most important responsibility of a school board is to employ a superintendent and to hold him or her responsible for managing the schools in accordance with the school board's policies.

Board members make decisions on a wide range of issues, such as hiring and evaluating a superintendent and treasurer, setting district policy, planning student services, setting goals and developing long-range plans, developing or approving curriculum, establishing budgets and creating community relations programs.

Another important part of the board's work is its public relations role. School board members help build public support and understanding of public education, and lead the public in demanding quality education. The school board serves as a link between schools and the public.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to run for the school board, you must be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years old, a resident of the state 30 days preceding the election, a resident of the school district and have been registered to vote for 30 days.

Additional Information

School Board Member – A school board functions locally, but is a legal agency of the state of Ohio and gets its power from the state's constitution, laws, and judicial decisions. Board of Education members are elected at large for four-year terms in staggered, odd-numbered years.

Sources: "School Boards: Duties, Responsibilities, Decision-Making, and Legal Basis for Local School Board Powers." Encyclopedia of Education. The Gale Group, 2002.