

FROM THE BALLOT TO YOUR BLOCK

You see the titles every election: comptroller, constable, railroad commissioner, judge.

But what do they actually do? This guide breaks it down in plain language—what each office does, why it matters, and how it can affect your everyday life.

FEDERAL — NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

These officials represent you in Washington, D.C.

U.S. SENATOR

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Help write and vote on laws for the whole country. Senators also vote on federal judges and some top government leaders.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

They vote on issues like Social Security, Medicare, taxes, immigration, national defense, and federal spending.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Congress is debating changes to Social Security, health care, taxes, or other national programs your family uses.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Help make federal laws and represent your part of Texas in Congress.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

They vote on federal spending and laws that affect your community. Their office can also help residents deal with federal agencies.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

You need help with Social Security, veterans' benefits, a passport, or another federal program.

STATE — TEXAS GOVERNMENT

These officials make decisions that affect people across Texas.

GOVERNOR

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Lead Texas government. The governor signs or vetoes bills, makes many state appointments, and helps set state priorities.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

The governor has a major say in schools, health care, public safety, roads, taxes, and emergency response.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Texas changes a major law, responds to a disaster, or makes a big decision about state spending.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Lead the Texas Senate and help decide which bills get heard and voted on.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office has a lot of influence over which ideas become Texas law.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major bill about schools, taxes, health care, housing, or public safety moves—or stalls—in the Texas Senate.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Serve as Texas' top lawyer. The office represents the state in court, collects child support, and handles some consumer protection work.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office can affect families, businesses, state agencies, and major legal fights involving Texas.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Texas files a major lawsuit, a consumer case makes the news, or a family needs help collecting child support.

COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Keep track of the state's money, collect many state taxes, and estimate how much Texas can afford to spend.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

That estimate helps determine how much money is available for schools, roads, health care, and other services.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

State leaders say Texas has extra money—or not enough money—to pay for a program.

COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Manage state-owned land and mineral rights and help oversee coastal protection, disaster recovery, and veterans' programs.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office manages valuable public resources and programs that can affect schools, communities, and disaster recovery.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A hurricane hits Texas or the state makes decisions about public land, coastal areas, or oil and gas rights.

COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Lead the Texas Department of Agriculture and oversee programs involving farming, food, rural communities, and some business measurements.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This work can affect food, school nutrition, consumer protections, rural communities, and the Texas economy.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

There is a question about food programs, farming, rural communities, or whether a store's scale is accurate.

RAILROAD COMMISSIONER**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Regulate much of Texas' oil and natural gas industry, pipelines, and some mining.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Their decisions can affect energy production, pipeline safety, the environment, and abandoned oil wells.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

There is an oil spill, pipeline problem, abandoned well, or debate about drilling.

TEXAS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Serve on Texas' highest court for most cases that are not criminal cases.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Their decisions can affect families, businesses, property owners, workers, and state laws across Texas.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major lawsuit about Texas law, property, business, elections, or government reaches the state's highest civil court.

TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Serve on Texas' highest court for criminal cases.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This court makes important decisions about criminal convictions, sentences, and the rights of people accused of crimes.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major criminal case or question about Texas criminal law reaches the state's highest criminal court.

COURT OF APPEALS JUSTICE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Review decisions made by lower courts and decide whether the law was applied correctly.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

An appeals court can uphold a lower court decision, change it, or send the case back for another look.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major court decision is appealed because one side believes the judge made a legal mistake.

STATE DISTRICT REPRESENTATION

These officials represent the part of Texas where you live.

TEXAS STATE SENATOR**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Write and vote on Texas laws and the state budget.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

They help make decisions about schools, property taxes, health care, roads, criminal justice, and other parts of daily life.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

The Texas Legislature is debating a law that could affect your taxes, schools, neighborhood, or access to services.

TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Write and vote on Texas laws and the state budget. They represent smaller areas than state senators.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Many rules that affect everyday life are made in Austin, not Washington.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

You want a Texas law changed or need someone to speak for your community at the State Capitol.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Help make decisions about what Texas public school students are expected to learn and which learning materials schools may use.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Their decisions can shape what children learn in classrooms across Texas.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

People are debating school curriculum, textbooks, history lessons, or what students should learn.

COUNTY —COUNTY GOVERNMENT

These officials make decisions that affect services across Dallas County.

COUNTY JUDGE

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Lead the County Commissioners Court and help guide county government.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office helps shape decisions about courts, jails, public health, elections, emergency response, and county spending.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Your County responds to an emergency, adopts its budget, or makes a major countywide decision.

CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Decide whether and how to prosecute many criminal cases in the county.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office has a major role in public safety and in how the local justice system handles victims and people accused of crimes.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major crime happens and people ask whether charges will be filed or how the case will be prosecuted.

COUNTY CLERK

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Keep important county records and records for several county courts.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This office helps people find public records and file important documents.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

You need a marriage record, court record, or other official county document.

DISTRICT CLERK

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Keep records for county district courts, including civil, family, and criminal cases.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Courts depend on accurate records and properly filed paperwork.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

You need to file or find documents connected to a district court case.

COUNTY TREASURER

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Help receive, protect, and track the county's money.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

The county manages large amounts of public money, and this office helps make sure it is properly accounted for.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Questions come up about how your county keeps, tracks, or manages public funds.

LOCAL COURTS — COUNTY

These judges handle different kinds of serious cases.

CRIMINAL DISTRICT COURT JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Handle serious criminal cases, including felony charges.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

These judges can make decisions about a person's freedom, bail, trials, and sentencing.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Someone is charged with a serious crime and the case goes to trial.

CIVIL DISTRICT COURT JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Handle major disputes involving money, property, businesses, contracts, and other civil matters.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

These judges decide important disputes that can affect families, businesses, property owners, and local institutions.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A major lawsuit involves property, money, a business dispute, or a government decision.

FAMILY DISTRICT COURT JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Handle family cases such as divorce, child custody, child support, and adoption.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

These judges make decisions that can deeply affect children, parents, and families.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A family is dealing with divorce, custody, support, or adoption.

COUNTY COURT JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Hear many smaller civil cases and misdemeanor criminal cases.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

These courts handle many legal problems that ordinary residents may face.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Someone faces a misdemeanor charge or has a smaller civil dispute that needs to be settled in court.

PROBATE COURT JUDGE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Handle cases involving wills, estates, and what happens to a person's property after death. They also handle some guardianship cases.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

These judges make important decisions about property, money, and who may make decisions for someone who cannot do so alone.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

A loved one dies and the family needs to settle an estate or deal with a will.

JUSTICE PRECINCT

These are some of the most local elected offices on the ballot.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Serve as local judges. They handle smaller lawsuits, many eviction cases, and some minor criminal matters.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

This is one of the courts people are most likely to deal with directly.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

You or someone you know faces an eviction, small lawsuit, or other everyday court issue.

CONSTABLE**WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Serve as elected peace officers for a local precinct. Constables deliver court papers, carry out court orders, and perform other law-enforcement duties.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

They help make sure court orders are actually carried out.

YOU MIGHT NOTICE THIS OFFICE WHEN...

Court papers need to be delivered, an eviction order must be carried out, or a local court needs law-enforcement support.

Sources: Information in this guide was compiled and translated into plain language using official government sources, including the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, Texas Secretary of State, Texas Judicial Branch, Texas Legislature, State Board of Education, Texas statewide agencies, and Dallas County government. Office descriptions were simplified for voter education purposes.