

Breakdown of How LEOs are Selected

Various options exist to categorize LEO selection methods. The below categorization was developed by ERN based on analysis of each state’s election code, in conjunction with Ballotpedia data and Bolts Magazine’s [catalogue of state election administration](#). Additional information is available in ERN’s report [“Who Certifies Elections in the U.S. and Abroad?”](#) Researchers Joshua Ferrer and Igor Geyn offer a slightly different breakdown in their article [Electing America’s Election Officials](#). Both analyses point to the reality that the highly varied methods across the nation each bring different strengths and challenges.

Summary: Partisanship of Local Election Offices by State

Note: In this document, “Partisan” refers to officials who are selected either in races in which partisan labels appear on the ballot; or who are appointed with consideration for partisan affiliation. “Nonpartisan” refers to officials who are either selected in races in which partisan labels do not appear on the ballot; or officials who are appointed or hired without consideration for partisan affiliation.

- **Appointment of county election leader.** 13 states (AK, DE, HI, MD, NJ, NY, NC, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, VA). Appointments are usually made by county election boards or county commissions, often these entities must include both major parties, in some cases such as OH and HI, the parties have equal seats. Scholars have found that appointed election officials outperform elected election officials on several key metrics.
- **Nonpartisan election of all or most county election leaders.** 6 states (MA, MN, NH, ND, OR, VT) use nonpartisan elections for all or most county election leader positions. Many election officials prefer to not be elected with a party label because the label implies that they are in some way representing or answering to one side, when elections require neutrally.
- **Partisan election of all or most county election leaders.** 25 states use partisan elections for all or most county election leader positions (AL, AZ, AR, CO, FL, ID, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MI, MO, MS, MT, NE, NM, NV, SD, TX, UT, WA, WV, WY).
- **Mixed systems.** The remaining 6 states use a mix of methods, many using appointment in the largest counties or cities and election in the rest of the state. (CA, CT, GA, ME, RI, WI).

Details: 50-State Local Election Office Structure

Note: “Even” and “Odd” entries in the election board columns indicate either a body which is governed by split bipartisan control (Even), or a body structured such that one party can control proceedings (Odd).

| | LOCAL: Primary Election Official(s) | LOCAL: Uniform System Statewide? | LOCAL: Party- Affiliated ? | LOCAL: Selection Method | LOCAL: Jurisdiction Level | LOCAL: Board Struc- ture | Details/Notes |
|----|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| AL | Probate Judge | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| AK | Election Supervisor | Yes | Yes | Appointed | Region | | |
| AZ | Recorder | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| AR | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| CA | Clerk | No | No | Varies | County | | Rather than a nonpartisan elected clerk, some counties may appoint a nonpartisan clerk, |

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| | | | | | | | nonpartisan election board, or nonpartisan registrar of voters. |
| CO | Clerk and Recorder | No | Primarily Partisan | Elected | County | | Denver's clerk is nonpartisan. |
| CT | Clerk & Registrar of Voters | No | Yes | Varies | Municipality | | Clerks are either elected or appointed as partisans; registrar of voters is bipartisan. |
| DE | Election Board | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Even | |
| FL | Supervisor of Elections | Yes | Yes | Primarily Elected | County | | Most counties elect a partisan supervisor, but several previously elected nonpartisan supervisors. A 2024 state court ruling required partisan election of supervisors. |
| GA | Varies | No | Varies | Varies | County | Varies | Depending on the county, the entity in charge of elections may be partisan or nonpartisan, elected or appointed, an individual or a board. |
| HI | Clerk | Yes | No | Appointed | County | | |
| ID | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| IL | Clerk | No | Yes | Primarily Elected | County | Odd | Six large municipalities (including Chicago) have a partisan appointed board which administers elections. |
| IN | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| IA | Auditor | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| KS | Clerk | No | Yes | Primarily Elected | County | | The four largest counties have an election commissioner appointed by Sec of State. |
| KY | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| LA | Clerk of Court | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| ME | Clerk/ Registrar of Voters | Yes | No | Varies | Municipality | | |
| MD | Board of Elections | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Odd | |
| MA | Clerk | No | Primarily Non-partisan | Varies | Municipality | | A handful of municipalities have an elected partisan clerk or appointed partisan board of elections rather than a nonpartisan clerk, which is the dominant model across the state. |
| MI | Clerk | Yes | Primarily Partisan | Elected | Municipality | | Most municipalities have partisan elected clerks, but some cities have nonpartisans. |
| MN | Auditor/ Treasurer | Yes | No | Varies | County | | Minnesota also has nonpartisan municipal clerks. |
| MS | Election Commission | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | Odd | |

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| MO | Clerk | No | Yes | Primarily elected | County | Even | Six counties have partisan election commissions appointed by the Governor; one county elects a partisan director of elections. |
| MT | Clerk and Recorder | No | Varies | Elected | County | | Most counties have an elected, partisan clerk and recorder; in 13 counties, the position is nonpartisan; in 6 counties, there is an elected or appointed election administrator position. |
| NE | Clerk | No | Yes | Primarily Elected | County | | Seven counties have an appointed partisan election commissioner rather than a clerk. |
| NV | Clerk | No | Varies | Elected | County | | Two counties have a registrar of voters appointed by the county commission; Carson City has a nonpartisan elected clerk. |
| NH | Clerk or Moderator | No | No | Varies | Municipality | | The clerk oversees voting in cities; in towns the moderator does. Town clerks are elected; city clerks are appointed by the city council. |
| NJ | Board of Elections | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Even | |
| NM | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| NY | Board of Elections | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Even | |
| NC | Election Board | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Even* | A new structure for evenly split bipartisan boards at the local and state levels is currently under litigation in NC. |
| ND | Auditor | Yes | No | Elected | County | | |
| OH | Board of Elections | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Even | The members of county boards of elections (2 Rep and 2 Dem) are appointed by Secretary of State, who serves as tiebreaker. |
| OK | Election Board | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Odd | |
| OR | Clerk or Elections Manager / Director | No | Primarily Non- partisan | Varies | County | | Most counties elect a nonpartisan clerk; 7 counties appoint elections manager/director; in 1 county the position is partisan. |
| PA | Election Director / Chief Registrar | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Varies | Composition of the body which appoints the election director varies by area. |
| RI | Clerk | Yes | Varies | Varies | Municipality | | |
| SC | Board of Voter Registration and Elections | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Odd | |
| SD | Auditor | Yes | Yes | Primarily Elected | County | | Elected in all but two counties. |
| TN | Election Commission | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Odd | |

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| TX | Varies | No | Primarily Partisan | Primarily elected | County | | The office in charge of elections varies by county, but most responsible entities are led by an elected partisan individual. |
| UT | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |
| VT | Clerk | Yes | No | Varies | Municipality | | |
| VA | Electoral Board | Yes | Yes | Appointed | County | Odd | County Electoral boards are 2 nominated by county level of the governor's party, 1 by county level of other major party. Boards appoint county registrars. |
| WA | Auditor | No | Primarily Partisan | Elected | County | | Elected in partisan races in all but five counties—four use nonpartisan election. One county has an appointed elections director. |
| WV | Clerk | No | Yes | Elected | County | | One county has an appointed election coordinator. |
| WI | Clerk | No | Varies | Varies | Municipal | Odd | Milwaukee has an elections commission; the rest of state has elected or appointed clerks at the municipal level, some of them partisan. |
| WY | Clerk | Yes | Yes | Elected | County | | |