

CHAPTER
25

Local Government and Finance

SECTION 1

CALIFORNIA COUNTIES, SPECIAL DISTRICTS, AND REGIONAL BODIES

TEXT SUMMARY

In most states, **counties** are the basic unit of local government. California has 58 counties. California has two types of counties: general law counties, and charter counties. General law counties follow state law in determining what structure their government has, whereas charter counties have opted to be governed according to another structure.

All California counties are governed by a Board of Supervisors that has the power to levy taxes and create local **ordinances**. In general law counties, there are five members of the Board of Supervisors; charter counties may use a

different number. Each county also has a sheriff, a district attorney, and an assessor.

Special districts are local governmental bodies created to handle a specific task, such as managing water resources or operating an airport. Nationally, the most common special district is the school district. In California, school districts are managed by an elected school board with three to seven members. California also has a system of **regional bodies**, which are designed to handle problems that extend over a broader area than any county or city.

Native American tribal governments in California are recognized for 109 California tribes. These governments provide local services for Native American groups.

THE BIG IDEA

Forms of local government in California include counties and special districts.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *Forms of Local Government*

Form	Function	Governing Body
County	Administers State and county laws and maintains such things as jails, roads, schools, and tax collection.	Board of Supervisors
Special District	Performs governmental functions at the local level, such as administering schools and providing water, police protection, and bridge and park maintenance.	An elected board

In most places, local government is visible mainly in the day-to-day services that keep communities going.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What role do a county's voters play in its management?
2. **Chart Skills** Name two functions of special districts.