

# TALK ABOUT YOUR COUNTY, ITS WORK AND THE SERVICES IT OFFERS

## COUNTY STRUCTURE

- County authority derives from states
- Authority differs widely from state to state
- All counties are governed by elected officials (such as commissioners, supervisors, freeholders, police jurors) with as few as three or as many as 45 officials
- A sheriff is the top law-enforcement official
- Some states authorize these positions to be appointed or elected:
  - Judges
  - Justices of the peace
  - Constables
  - Auditors
  - Clerks
  - District or county attorneys
  - Tax Assessor Collector

## COUNTY HISTORY

In England counties served as the local government.

County structure was adopted by colonists in North America (1634)

## OUR NATIONS COUNTIES

- 3,068 nationally
- Louisiana called “Parishes”  
Alaska called “Boroughs”
- Most counties - Texas (254)  
Fewest - Delaware (3) Hawaii (4)
- Los Angeles County, CA - 10 million people; Loving County, TX – 60 people
- North Slope Borough, AK - 86,000 sq. mi.
- Arlington County, VA - 26 sq. mi.
- Population > 500,000 – 80 counties
- Population < 50,000 – 2,142 counties
- 37 City/County consolidated governments

Glen Whitley's Presidential Initiative asks county officials to raise awareness about the services and programs we provide. Here are some talking points. Speak to business leaders, community and faith-based organizations, nonprofits, youth groups and others about county government. **Give it your own spin.**

## COUNTY SERVICES

- Courts, including records of civil lawsuits and criminal justice cases
- Record keeping
  - Property
  - Business filings
  - Births & deaths
  - Marriages
- Public Safety
  - Operation of jails
  - Medical examiner services
- Property assessment - tax collection
- Elections - federal, state and county and local elections
- Public health
  - Disease prevention and immunization
  - Promote healthy lifestyles
  - Run county hospitals
- Emergency services
- Road and Bridge maintenance
- Human services
  - mental health care programs
  - job search and retraining efforts
- May do drinking water; wastewater treatment; solid waste collection
- May do land use planning and economic development

Counties are administrative districts of the state that make sure services are efficiently delivered locally. As a level of government closest to the people, county officials provide a measure of local control over important matters that affect our families and our communities.

## YOUR COUNTY

- Identify yourself and other officeholders and responsibilities
- Key departments and their services

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- Describe history & significant events
- Outline programs for children, families, seniors, veterans, etc.

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- Your county budget

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- Mandated spending –State/Fed
- Local spending
- Talk about how counties work together
  - Cooperative purchasing
  - State associations of counties
  - National Assoc. of Counties (NACo)

**Hand out pamphlets with county facts, phone numbers and web addresses.**

