



A Tour of Nebraska County Government

A presentation of the Nebraska Association of County Officials

A tour of Nebraska counties provides a brief look at the functions and services of our county government.

For more information about county government, visit the Nebraska Association of County Officials website at

www.nebraskacounties.org



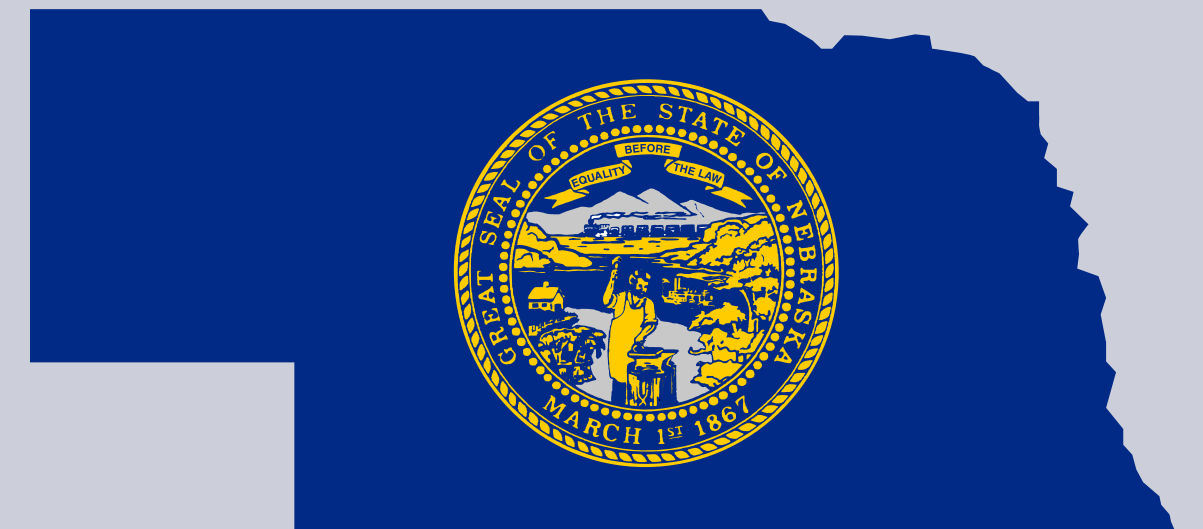
History of County Government

- County Government can trace its roots to the English shire of a thousand years ago
- County Government came to the American colonies with the first English settlers
- With the forming of the United States, the US Constitution did not address local government
- Subsequently, the early state constitutions view the counties as arms of the state
- Today, there are **3,069 counties** in the United States

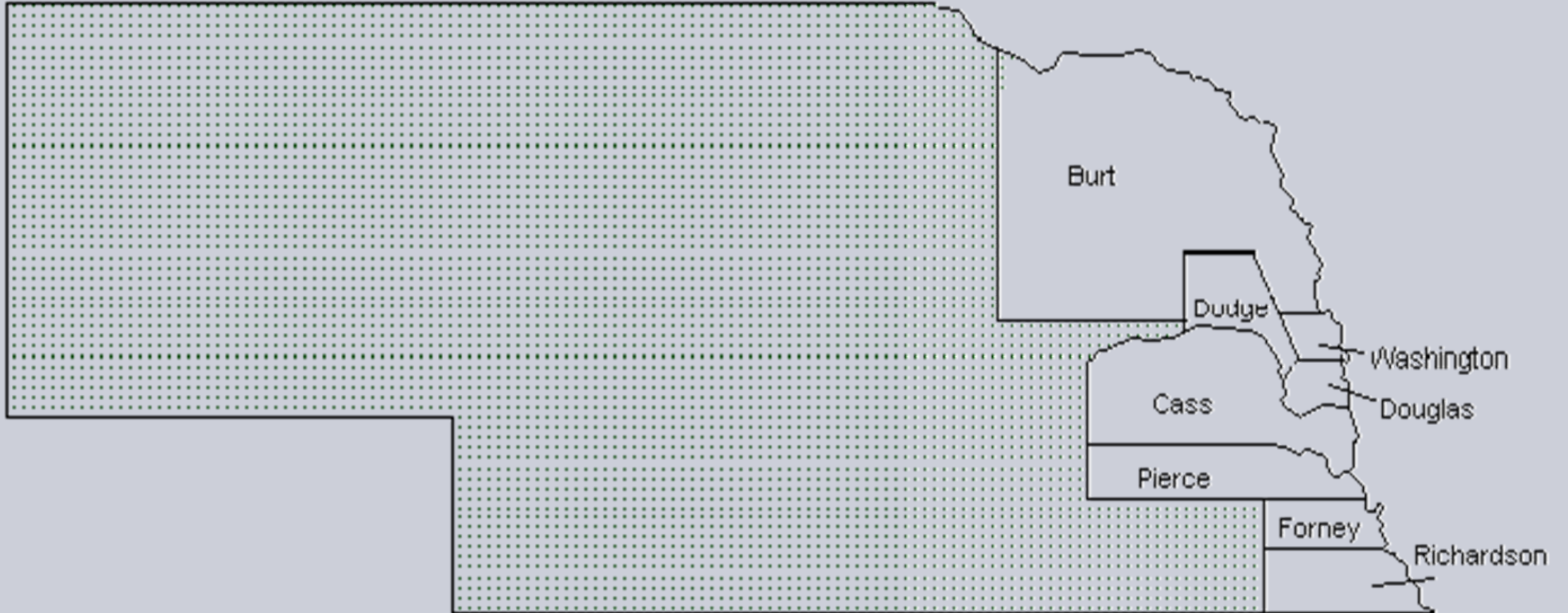


County Government in Nebraska

- Counties actually pre-date Nebraska's statehood, as the first county boundaries were established in 1855 by the Territorial Legislature
- Nebraska didn't become a state until 1867
- 8 original counties were established stretching westward from the Missouri River



Map of Nebraska's Eight Original Counties



County Government in Nebraska

- County Government is the oldest form of government in Nebraska
- The **Otoe County courthouse** in Nebraska City was built in **1865** and still stands as the oldest public building in the state



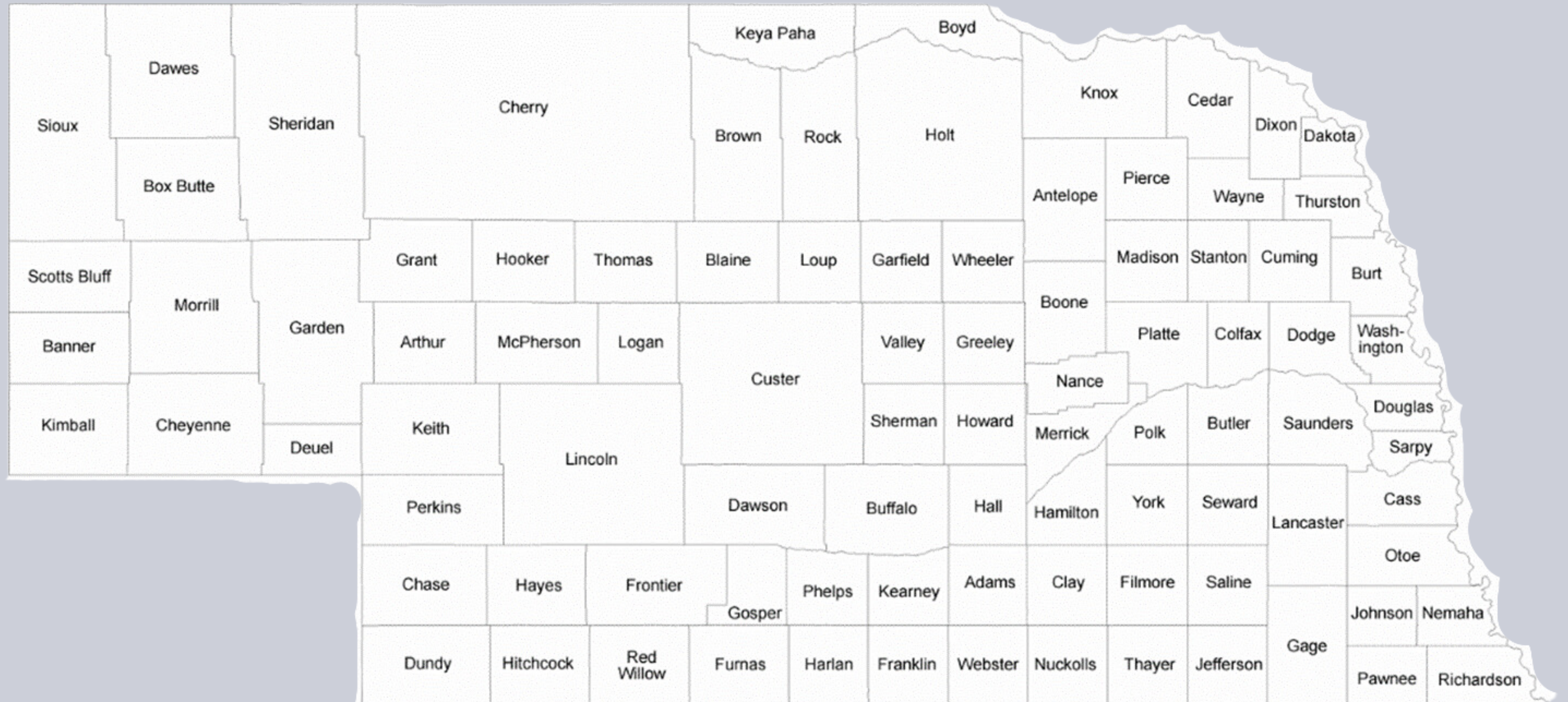
Otoe County Courthouse

County Government in Nebraska



- County government works on a local level to carry out a variety of responsibilities assigned by the Nebraska Legislature
- **County government serves all of Nebraska**

Nebraska Currently Has 93 Counties



Nebraska is a diverse state.

Stretching from the Missouri River...



...to the Sandhills



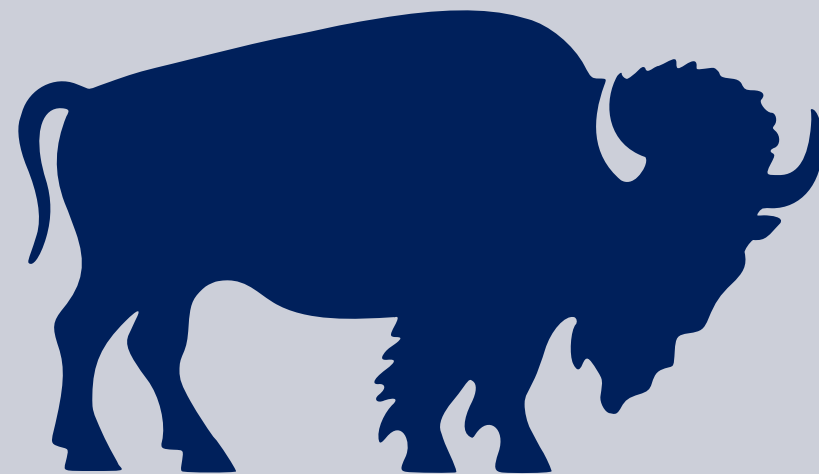
Nebraska County Diversity

- **County Populations** range from just under 500 in Arthur County to more than 560,000 in Douglas County*
- **County sizes** range from 240 square miles in Sarpy County to 6,009 square miles in Cherry County

**Based on 2017 Census Data*

Nebraska County Names

- 69 counties were named in honor of **prominent citizens** (ex. Boone, Garfield, Dodge...)
- The remaining 24 counties received their names from **animals, landmarks, rivers, Indian tribes, or counties in other states** (ex. Buffalo, Scotts Bluff, Keya Paha...)



County Government Structure

- Two forms of county government are currently used in Nebraska
- Commissioner Form
 - 3 to 7 board members called County Commissioners
 - Used in 71 counties
- Supervisor Form
 - 7 board members called County Supervisors
 - Used in 22 counties

County Government Structure

- County governments provide services through the following elected and appointed officials:

The County Board, Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, Sheriff, Surveyor, Clerk of the District Court, Register of Deeds, Attorney, Public Defender, Veterans Service Officer, Highway Superintendent, Weed Control Superintendent, Emergency Manager, and Election Commissioner

County Board

- The County Board is the elected governing body of the county
- Responsibilities include: the county budget, levying of taxes, payment of bills and claims, setting the salaries for all county officials, and the supervision of all county buildings



County Clerk

- Elected to be the chief record keeper for the county and to keep track of the Board's proceedings
- The Clerk issues marriage licenses and files other important county documents, such as budgets, reports, and permits



County Treasurer

- Elected to collect taxes on property
- Distributes tax money to towns, schools, natural resource districts, community colleges, and other local government offices
- Generally, 15% of property tax money is used for county government, 15% for city governments, 65% for schools, and the remaining 5% for other political subdivisions
- Issues motor vehicle titles and registrations



County Assessor

- Elected to assess the value of real and personal property
- Property is valued for taxation purposes
- Property includes land, homes, buildings, mobile homes, and commercial property



County Sheriff

- The county's chief law enforcement officer
- Elected to investigate crimes, keep records of criminal activity, supervise the jail, escort prisoners, and collect overdue taxes



County Surveyor

- Responsible for making all official surveys of the county
- Keep record of all land boundaries, subdivisions, and public lands within the county
- In some counties, the surveyor is elected while in other counties the position is appointed



Clerk of the District Court

- Keeps records of what happens in the district court, such as the filing of civil and criminal actions
- The Clerk collects fines levied by the court
- The Clerk is usually elected



Register of Deeds

- Keeps records of property ownership and location
- Keeps all property records dealing with real estate, such as titles, deeds and mortgages
- The Register of Deeds is elected in most Nebraska counties



County Attorney

- The legal counsel for the county
- The County Attorney is either elected or appointed to prosecute, on behalf of the state, people who have been charged with violating laws



Public Defender

- The counties provide an elected or appointed attorney to represent those charged with a crime that cannot afford an attorney



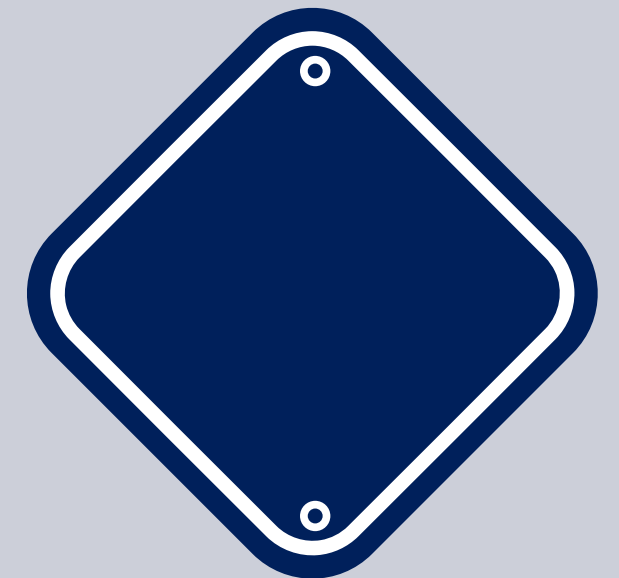
Veterans Service Officer

- Appointed to help discharged military veterans and their family acquire benefits, pensions, and medical care



Highway Superintendent

- Appointed to oversee all of the maintenance and construction of county roads and bridges
- Duties include snow removal, repairing potholes, installing culverts, and maintaining ditches and road signs



Weed Control Superintendent

- Appointed to detect and treat weeds that are harmful to the environment
- Also makes sure that landowners eradicate noxious weeds on their property



Emergency Manager

- Appointed to develop plans for handling emergencies and natural disasters
- Covering floods, tornadoes, fires, and even war



Election Commissioner

- Registers voters
- Conducts elections
- Oversees the counting of ballots
- Often also the County Clerk



Planning and Zoning Director

- Appointed to ensure that the development plan adopted by the County Board is followed
- Oversees zoning regulations

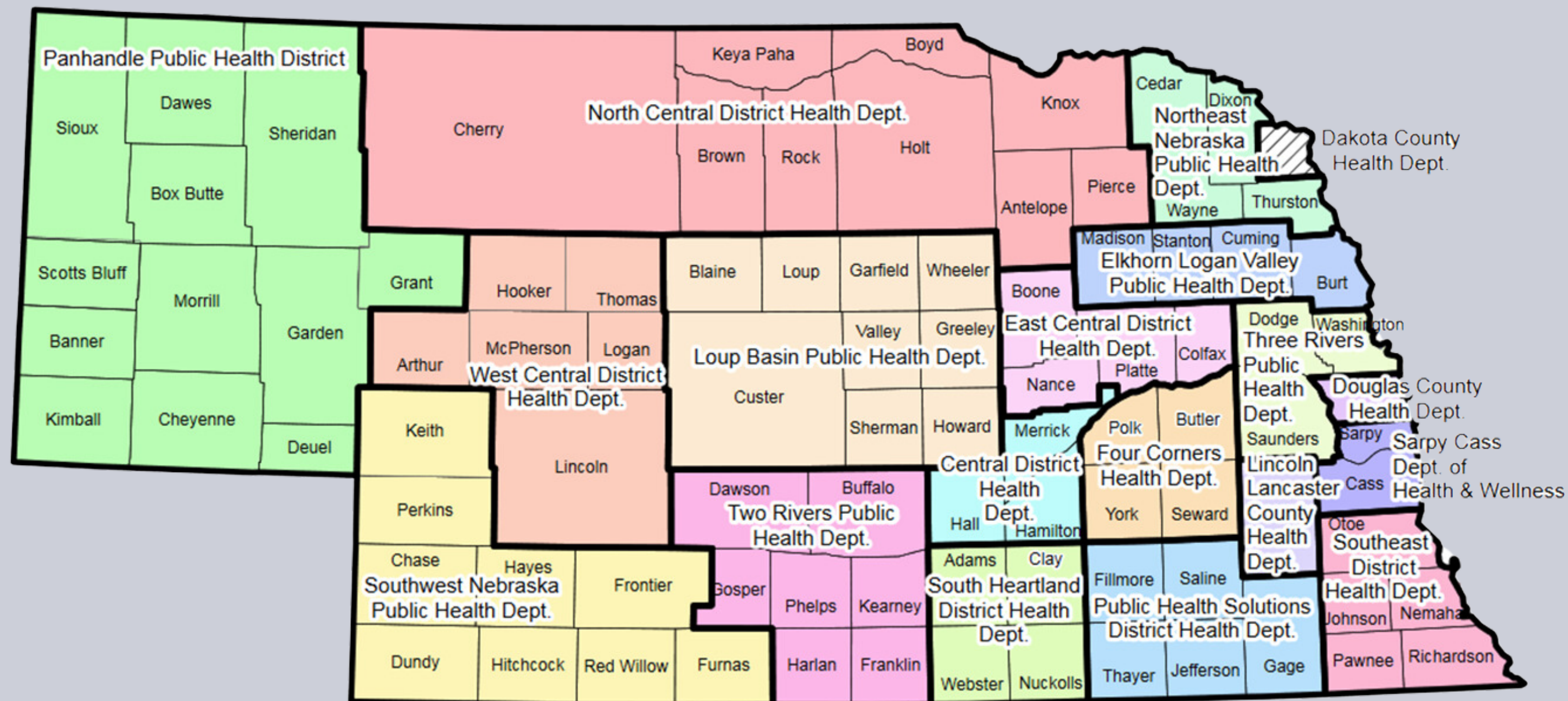


County Health Department

- Counties in Nebraska have a health department or are part of a district health department
- Provides services to prevent and control disease through immunizations, water testing, investigating illness, and teaching health class



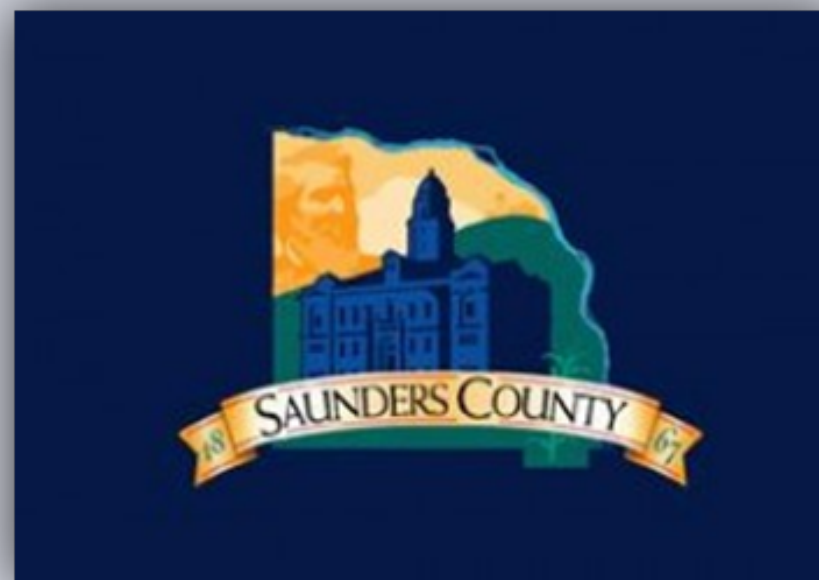
Map of Nebraska Health Departments



As of December, 2016

County government is at the center of what happens in Nebraska, linking over 1.9 million Nebraska citizens together.

From registering voters to fixing roads, county government works to meet the needs of the people living there.



County Government Day

A program to teach students about county government

- Started in Nebraska by Chief Justice Robert Simmons in 1947 in order to stress the importance of county government
- Sponsored by the state and local American Legion posts, state and local American Legion Auxiliary posts and the Nebraska Association of County Officials



National County Government Day

- Founded by the National Association of Counties (NACo)
- Held each April
- Formerly National County Government Week, which has been celebrated since 1991, the goal of county government month is to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's counties



American Legion

- Chartered by Congress in 1919
- The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization
- Supports present active duty military personnel along with its commitment to all veterans and their families
- Motto: "Still Serving America"



Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO)

- Organized in 1894 and formally incorporated in 1968
- A non-profit organization composed of 93 member counties
- Objective: to stimulate and contribute to the continuing improvement of county government in Nebraska
- NACO regularly sponsors continuing education programs, conducts research, publishes educational materials (such as this slideshow), administers cost-saving programs, and represents the interests of Nebraska counties before state and federal governments, agencies, and boards



Whether you are looking back at our rich history or looking ahead at a positive future, county government is at the center of what happens in Nebraska.

County government links the past, present, and future together...



Hall County Courthouse & Jail, completed in 1873



Hall County Courthouse & Jail, completed in 1904



Grand Island - Hall County Law Enforcement Center, completed in 2008

County Government

It Happens Where You Live

