

# Alaska

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Alaska ranks 48th among the states in number of local governments, with 175 as of June 2002.

## **BOROUGH GOVERNMENTS (12)**

The borough governments in Alaska resemble county governments in other states. However, the borough governments do not encompass the entire area of the state. The following areas of the state are located outside the areas served by borough governments:

Areas served by consolidated cityborough governments  
Areas within the "unorganized borough"

There are four consolidated city-borough governments in Alaska—Anchorage, Juneau, Sitka, and Yakutat. These four governments are counted for census reporting as municipal governments rather than as borough governments. Alaska statutes treat all areas of the state outside the boundaries of organized borough or consolidated cityborough governments as a single "unorganized borough."

The borough governments in Alaska are classified, according to their governmental powers, as home-rule, first class, second class, or third class boroughs. Each borough is administered by a borough assembly.

For purposes of population statistics, Alaska is divided into 27 "county equivalents." Each area served by a borough or consolidated city-borough government constitutes a separate county equivalent. In addition, the unorganized borough is divided into 11 census areas, each of which is classified as a county equivalent for purposes of population statistics. These 11 census areas are not counted as governments.

Alaska Native Regional Corporations are corporate entities that conduct the business and nonprofit affairs of Alaska Natives. They were established under a federal law, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. There are 12 regional corporations that cover the entire state, except for Annette Islands Reserve, which is an American Indian reservation. A thirteenth regional corporation was established for Alaska Natives who are not permanent residents of the state and who have not enrolled in one of the other 12 regional corporations. These corporate entities are not counted as governments for census purposes.

Alaska Native Villages are tribes, bands, clans, groups, villages, communities, or associations in Alaska that are recognized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Governments—State Descriptions

Alaska Native Villages do not cross Alaska Native Regional Corporation boundaries. These entities are not counted as governments for census purposes.

## **SUBBOROUGH GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (149)**

### **Municipal Governments (149)**

The term "municipality," as defined for census statistics on governments, applies only to the cities in Alaska. Boroughs, to which the term "municipality" is applied by Alaska statutes, are counted for census purposes as a separate type of government (see "Borough Governments," above). Cities may exist either inside or outside the boundaries of organized boroughs. First class and home-rule cities located outside the boundaries of organized boroughs have powers of property assessment and tax collection. All cities outside borough boundaries may plan, zone and carry out the powers granted to Alaska cities generally.

Cities are classified as follows:

Home-rule cities—first class cities under a home rule charter

First class cities—400 or more permanent inhabitants, and that elect to become cities of the first class

Second class cities—other cities

There is no statutory minimum population requirement for incorporation, but cities must include all areas needed to provide municipal services efficiently, must have the resources needed to provide municipal services, must have a population sufficiently stable to support city government, and must demonstrate a need for city government.

### **Township Governments (0)**

Alaska has no township governments.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (54)**

### **School District Governments (0)**

Alaska has no independent school district governments.

### **Dependent Public School Systems (54)**

Alaska statutes provide for the following types of dependent public school systems:

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Systems dependent on borough governments (15):

- Borough school districts
- Ilisagvik College

Systems dependent on municipal governments (22):

- City school districts (in home-rule or first class cities in the unorganized borough)

Systems dependent on the state government(17):

- Regional educational attendance area boards.

The 14 borough and 22 city school districts in Alaska are classified for census purposes as dependent agencies of the borough or city governments they serve, and are not counted as separate governments. Although these districts are administered by elected boards, their fiscal requirements are finally determined and met by the sponsoring borough or city governments. In addition, Ilisagvik College was established by the North Slope Borough for higher education in that area.

The public schools in Alaska located outside the territory of borough or city school systems are administered by regional educational attendance area boards. Although these 17 boards are elected, their fiscal requirements are met by state appropriations; they are therefore classified as dependent agencies of the state government for census purposes, and are not counted as separate governments.

### **Other Educational Activities**

Community colleges, which are financed jointly by the state government and the local public school system, are classified in census statistics as state government activities and are administered by the University of Alaska. They are not counted as separate governments. The regional resource centers in Alaska are established by agreement between participating public school systems. A board consisting of one representative of each participating system governs each center. These centers are financed by contributions from participating systems and by state and federal grants. For census purposes, regional resource centers are classified as joint educational service agencies of participating public school systems, and are not counted as separate governments. One such center was reported in operation as of June 2002.

The Special Education Service Agency is a state dependent agency that was created by an act of the legislature to provide special education services. The agency may receive state appropriations on a per student basis.

### **SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (14)**

Alaska statutes authorize the creation of districts or authorities that are counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

#### **Regional Electrical Authorities**

Regional electrical authorities may be created by resolution of a native association to provide electric power. The

commissioners of the authority are appointed by the governing body of the native association. The authority may fix rates, fees, rentals, and other charges, and may issue revenue bonds.

#### **Regional Native Housing Authorities**

Regional native housing authorities may be formed by resolution of a native association to provide housing and community facilities in native villages. The commissioners of the authority are appointed by the governing body of the native association. The authority may fix rentals, accept grants, and issue revenue bonds.

### **SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS**

Shown below are various government designations in Alaska that have certain characteristics of governmental units but which are classified in statistics as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see "Public School Systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (state).** This corporation, authorized by act of the legislature, was created to provide mortgage credit for low and moderate income housing. The corporation consists of a board of seven directors, four of whom are appointed by the governor, plus the commissioner of revenue, the commissioner of community and regional affairs, and the commissioner of health and social services, who serve in an ex officio capacity. The corporation may receive gifts, grants, and appropriations, collect charges and fees in connection with the loans it makes, and issue revenue bonds.

**Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (state).** This authority was created by act of the legislature to assist in the financing of industrial, export, and business enterprises. The authority board consists of the commissioner of commerce and economic development and the commissioner of revenue, who serve in an ex officio capacity, plus two public members appointed by the governor. The authority may fix rentals, accept grants, and issue revenue bonds.

**Alaska Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board and soil and water conservation districts (state).** This board was created by an act of legislature. The board consists of five members, selected from the five major land areas of the state, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by a majority of the legislature. The commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources is a nonvoting member who serves in ex officio capacity. The commissioner may receive state and federal contributions. Soil and water conservation districts are created by the commissioner upon petition of land users, after public

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hearing. A board of five elected supervisors governs each district. The commissioner may delegate such powers to the districts as deemed necessary.

Other examples include:

**State<sup>1</sup>**

Alaska Aerospace Development Corporation  
Alaska Capital City Development Corporation<sup>1</sup>  
Alaska Gas Pipeline Financing Authority  
Alaska Medical Facility Authority  
Alaska Municipal Bond Bank Authority  
Alaska Energy Authority (formerly Alaska Power Authority)  
Alaska Railroad Corporation  
Alaska Student Loan Corporation

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<sup>1</sup>Authorizing legislation has not been repealed, but the Alaska Capital City Development Corporation is inactive.

Grazing districts  
Health units and districts  
Regional resource development authorities  
Service areas in the unorganized borough

**Borough**

Historical districts  
Port Authorities  
Service areas  
Special assessment Districts

**Municipal**

Historical districts  
Port Authorities  
Special assessment Districts

Alaska laws also provide for various types of local REAs for election purposes and for administration of justice.