

# Viking Quest: Government Assignments

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May 2015

Week: 11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>

- *Read and complete Chapter 24 Study Guide handout pages 274-283*
- *Read and complete chapter 24 section (1 & 2) assessments pages 662-675, Government textbook*

# STUDY GUIDE Chapter 24, Section 1

For use with textbook pages 663–668.

## STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### KEY TERMS

- county** The largest political subdivision of a state (page 663)  
**county board** The governing board of most counties (page 664)  
**township** A unit of local government found in some states, usually a subdivision of a county (page 664)  
**municipality** An urban unit of government chartered by a state (page 665)  
**special district** A unit of local government that deals with a specific function, such as education, water supply, or transportation (page 665)  
**incorporation** The process of setting up a legal community under state law (page 666)  
**referendum** A special election (page 666)

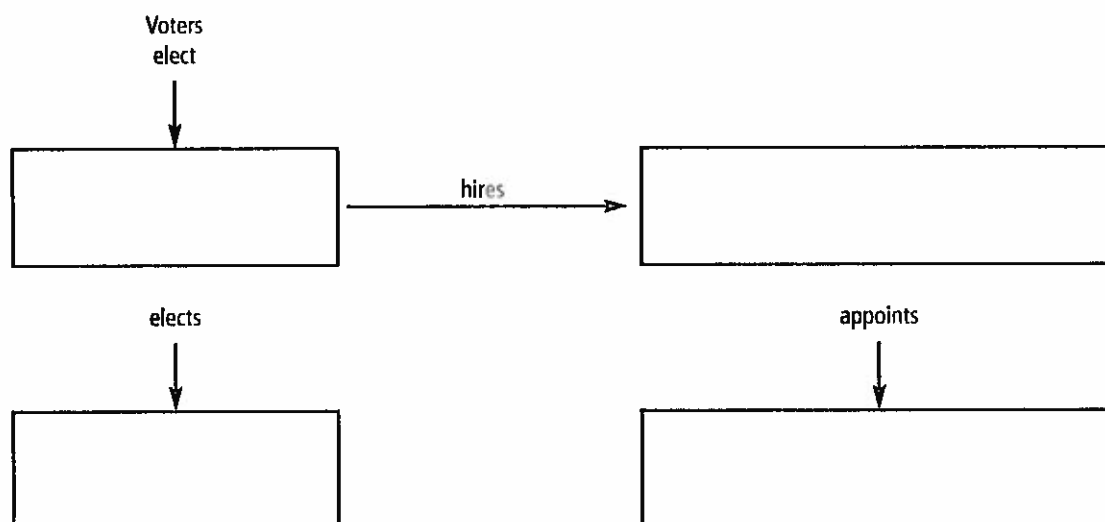
### DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

What form of local government does your community have? If you do not already know, try to figure out the answer from the descriptions in the section.

This section focuses on the different kinds of local government.

### ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the graphic organizer below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the roles of officials in the council-manager form of government. Then fill in the missing labels.



**STUDY GUIDE** (continued)**Chapter 24, Section 1****READ TO LEARN****Introduction** (page 663)

Local governments take many forms, such as counties, townships, municipalities, and special districts.

**Created by the State** (page 663)

Local governments are established by the states and are dependent on state governments. The state may take control of or even abolish them. For example, a state may take control of a school district that has money problems. State constitutions may set forth the powers and duties of local governments, the forms of government they may adopt, and the kinds of taxes they can levy.

1. What do state constitutions set forth for local governments?
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**Types of Local Government** (page 663)

The United States has the following basic types of local government:

**The County** is normally the largest territorial and political subdivision of a state. All states except Connecticut and Rhode Island have counties. Louisiana calls its counties parishes, and Alaska calls them burroughs. County government is important in rural areas. On the other hand, county government is unimportant in New England. County government has grown in importance in some metropolitan areas where counties have assumed the jobs that cities once handled.

A **county board** has the authority to govern most counties. Board members are almost always popularly elected. County boards usually decide on the county budget, taxes, and zoning codes. In many counties, the board has both executive and legislative powers. In other counties the board members share powers with elected officials such as the county sheriff, attorney, clerk, and school superintendent.

**The Township** Twenty states, mainly in New England and the Midwest, have **townships**. Counties are subdivided into townships in most states. In areas of rapid urban growth, townships have assumed some of the jobs of city government, such as providing water, sewage disposal, and police protection.

**The New England Town** The town meeting served as the center of government in New England towns. At the town meeting, citizens took part in making laws, decided on taxes, and appropriating money for public projects. They also elected town officials called "selectmen." Today citizens of large towns and cities elect representatives to attend town meetings in their stead. These selectmen now have the power to make decisions the citizens at town meetings once made. Some towns have also hired town managers.

**The Municipality** is an urban unit of government—a town, borough, city, or urban district that has legal rights granted by a state charter. Most states divide municipalities into classes according to population. Each class gets a standard type of charter.

**The Special District** is a unit of local government that deals with a specific area, such as education, water supply, or transportation. Special districts are the most common type of local government.

**Tribal Government** Some states have a separate level of government that serves its Native American population. Each tribal office has a governor and a lieutenant governor. In New Mexico, the Indian Affairs Department was established in 1953 to serve as a liaison between the tribal governments and the state government.

**STUDY GUIDE** (continued)**Chapter 24, Section 1**

2. What are the basic types of local government in the United States?
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**▣ Forms of Municipal Government** (page 666)

A municipal government may be formed when a group of people ask the state legislature to permit their community to incorporate, or set up a legal community. The process of *incorporation* differs from state to state. Generally a community must have a population of a certain size and petitions signed by a certain number of residents requesting incorporation. A referendum, or special election, may be held to decide if people want incorporation. Once the community is incorporated, the state issues a charter. This allows the community to have its own government and gives the municipal corporation legal status. It can then enter into contracts, sue and be sued in court, purchase, own, and sell property.

Today urban areas in the United States use one of the following basic forms of municipal government:

**The Mayor-Council form** is the most widely used form of municipal government. Executive power belongs to an elected mayor. Legislative power belongs to an elected council. Most cities have a unicameral, or one-house, council.

The two main types of mayor-council government are the:

- A. Strong mayor system, in which the mayor has powers, such as a veto, over the city council
- B. Weak-mayor system, in which the mayor has little control over the budget or the hiring and firing of municipal workers

**The Commission form** combines executive and legislative powers in an elected commission of five to seven members. Each member is in charge of departments such as police, fire, public works, finance, and parks. The commissioners also make laws. This form of government has the following problems:

- A. The absence of a powerful leader often leads to a lack of cooperation and planning.
- B. Commissioners often agree to support one another's budget requests. This results in a budget that is more generous than it should be.

**The Council-Manager Form** An elected council of between five and nine members makes the laws. It also appoints the city manager. The manager is responsible for:

- A. appointing and firing municipal workers,
- B. preparing the budget, and
- C. running the day-to-day affairs of the city.

The council-manager form of government often includes a mayor whom the council elects for a two-year term. Supporters of the system believe it makes it easy for voters to place the blame because the executive and legislative powers are clearly separated. Critics point out that the council-manager plan may not provide the leadership needed in large cities with ethnic and economic diversity.

3. Describe some of the problems of the commission form of government.
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# STUDY GUIDE Chapter 24, Section 2

For use with textbook pages 669–675.

## SERVING LOCALITIES

### KEY TERMS

**zoning** The method used by a local government to regulate the **uses** of land and buildings in order to shape community development (page 669)

**mass transit** Systems such as subways that are used to transport a large number of people (page 671)

**metropolitan area** A large city and its surrounding suburbs (page 671)

**suburb** A densely settled territory adjacent to a central city (page 672)

**real property** Land and whatever is attached to or growing on it (page 673)

**personal property** Movable belongings such as clothes and jewelry as well as intangible items like stocks, bonds, copyrights, and patents (page 673)

**assessment** The process of calculating the value of property to be taxed (page 674)

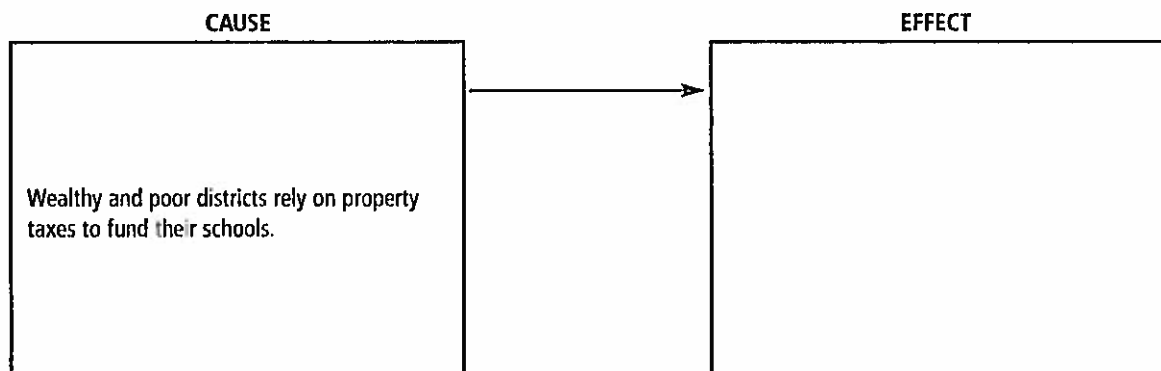
**market value** The amount of money an owner may expect to receive if property is sold (page 674)

### DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Who provides the clean water that comes through your tap? The answer is probably local government. This section focuses on services that local governments provide.

### ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the graphic organizer below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the results of relying on property taxes.



**STUDY GUIDE** (continued)**Chapter 24, Section 2****READ TO LEARN****Introduction** (page 669)

Taxes pay for most of the services local government offers.

**Local Government Services** (page 669)

Local government provides:

**Education** A large share of local tax revenues go to pay for public schools. Local funding contributes to inequalities in schools because wealthier districts can afford to provide much better educational opportunities.

**Zoning** Local governments use *zoning* to regulate the way land and buildings are used. For example, a zoning board may rule that certain districts, or zones, be used only for homes, others only for businesses, and others only for parks.

**Police and Fire Protection** Police protection is the second largest expense of many American cities, after utilities. Fire protection is a local service that varies with the size of the community. In small towns volunteers usually staff the fire department. In large cities, full-time professional fire fighters provide protection.

**Water Supply** Small communities may contract with privately owned companies to supply water. Some local governments create special water districts to deal with the threat of water pollution and water shortages.

**Sewage and Sanitation** Many local governments maintain sewage treatment plants. Untreated sewage can endanger life and property. Sewage and sanitation costs have forced some small communities to contract with private companies. Landfills are no longer the only solution to waste disposal. Some local governments use garbage-processing plants to dispose of their solid wastes.

**Transportation** Millions of Americans rely on either the automobile or mass transit systems such as subways, trains, and buses to get to work and to shop. Local governments spend millions of dollars to maintain more than 3 million miles of streets. They also encourage people to use mass transit for the following reasons:

- A. Mass transit carries more people per vehicle than automobiles.
- B. Mass transit pollutes less than automobiles.
- C. Mass transit uses less energy per person than automobiles.

**Social Services** Local governments offer the following services to people who cannot afford them:

- A. Aid to people who are temporarily unemployed
- B. Hospital care for people who need medical attention
- C. Direct assistance to needy people in the form of cash payments

The money local governments put into social services continues to rise even though federal and state governments pay part of the cost.

**Recreation and Cultural Activities** Many local communities offer programs in swimming, dancing, theater, puppetry, arts and crafts, and sports. They also maintain parks, zoos, and museums. In addition, many cities have helped build stadiums, arenas, and convention centers.

# STUDY GUIDE (continued)

## Chapter 24, Section 2

1. Why do municipalities encourage mass transit?

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### Metropolitan Communities (page 671)

Cities, towns, and villages are metropolitan communities. A *metropolitan area* is a large city and its surrounding suburbs. This area may also include small towns that lie beyond the suburbs.

*Cities* are densely populated areas with commercial, industrial, and residential sections. They are chartered by the state as municipal corporations.

*Towns* were home to most Americans in the early history of the United States. Cities grew faster than towns after 1860. However, towns experienced growth between 1970 and 1990 as cities faced problems.

*Suburbs* are the densely populated territory neighboring one or more central cities. Today more Americans live in suburbs than in cities or rural areas. A suburb may be called a village, town, or city, and it usually has its own form of government.

2. How has the American population shifted between the early history of the United States and today?

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### Special Districts (page 673)

Special districts make their own policies, levy taxes, and borrow needed money. Local governments establish special districts because they are:

- A. better able to respond to solving specific problems than other units of local government, and
- B. not subject to the financial limitations of local budgets strained to meet the needs of a community.

The local school district is one such special district. The school board is responsible for:

- A. setting school policies,
- B. hiring a superintendent of schools,
- C. overseeing the daily workings of schools,
- D. making up the school budget,
- E. deciding on new school programs and facilities,
- F. approving the hiring of teachers and supervisors, and
- G. deciding on the amount of local school taxes, in some cases.

3. Why would a local government with a tight budget create a special district?

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**STUDY GUIDE** (continued)**Chapter 24, Section 2****Regional Arrangements** (page 673)

In the 1990s local governments joined together to develop collective approaches to regional issues. Their efforts address issues from waste management to law enforcement. For example, city police departments and county sheriffs' offices in some areas share crime laboratories, keep joint records, operate joint radio bands, and share the cost of training personnel.

4. What are the advantages of regional arrangements?

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**Financing Local Government** (page 673)

Taxes provide the funds to pay for local government services. Today property taxes are the most important source of revenue for local governments. Property taxes are collected on real property and personal property. **Real property** includes land and buildings. **Personal property** consists of such things as jewelry, bonds, and furniture. Figuring the value of the property to be taxed is called **assessment**. The tax assessor appraises the market value of homes and other real property in the community. The **market value** is the amount the owner may expect to receive if the property is sold. Government usually taxes property based on its assessed value, which is only a percentage of its market value. Critics charge that the property tax is unfair for the following reasons:

- A. It places a heavier burden on low-income people and on retired homeowners with fixed incomes.
- B. Property values are difficult to determine on a fair and equal basis.
- C. Reliance on the property tax results in unequal services. A wealthy community with a large tax base can afford better services than a less wealthy community with a small tax base.
- D. Some properties, such as those used by religious or charitable organizations, are tax exempt. So nonexempt property owners have to bear a heavier share of the tax.
- E. Other local revenue sources include local income taxes, sales taxes, fines and fees, and government-owned businesses. Local governments also raise money for large, expensive projects such as sports stadiums or school buildings by selling municipal bonds.

Most local governments receive economic aid from state and federal governments. This aid comes in the form of grants. Most state aid consists of categorical-formula grants for specific programs. Federal aid comes in categorical grants and block grants. Local governments prefer block grants, or unrestricted aid. These grants transfer cash from the federal government to community development or social services.

5. What is the difference between a property's market value and its assessed value?

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