



JACQUES L. BLANCHETTE

County Judge

The county judge is the senior elected official of their respective county and is elected by way of a county wide election every four years. The judge serves as the county's chief executive officer and is the presiding officer as well as a voting member of the five member commissioners court which is the governing body of county government. He is also responsible for calling elections, posting election notices and the receiving and canvassing of election returns. The judge is also the statutory director of emergency management for the county. He is required to fulfill a yearly quota of continuing education courses on matters relating to county government and judicial duties.

The judge presides over a constitutional county court. Actual judicial responsibilities of this office varies among counties because statutory county courts at law exist with overlapping jurisdiction in many counties. In a few counties, portions of usual county court jurisdiction have been assigned to district courts. In many metropolitan areas of the state, the job of county judge is primarily administrative.

In the role of presiding officer of the commissioners court, the judge oversees all county government departments through the court's responsibility for developing annual budgets for the entire county. The judge prepares the county budget with the assistance of the county auditor or the county clerk then presents it to commissioners court for approval or change before adopting it.

Generally, county courts have jurisdiction (with justice of the peace courts) in civil cases when the amount in controversy is at least \$200 but not over \$10,000. County courts have concurrent jurisdiction with district courts when the disputed amount is between \$500 and \$5,000, exclusive of interest. County courts have appellate (from justice of the peace and municipal courts) jurisdiction over Class C misdemeanors in which the fine is \$250 or more exclusive of costs, and original jurisdiction in Class A and B misdemeanors (except official misconduct) where the fine imposed is not more than \$4,000.

Constitutional county judges have original jurisdiction in probate matters, including mental illness and guardianship cases. The judge may act as juvenile judge and serve on the county adult and juvenile boards, as well as perform marriages and act as a coroner, when necessary. A county judge is not required to be an attorney, but the Texas Constitution stipulates that the judge "shall be well-informed in the law of the state."