

## THE HISTORY OF NH COUNTY GOVERNMENT

County government was established in 1771 with five counties: Rockingham, Strafford, Hillsborough, Cheshire and Grafton. There are now 10 counties.

County government is structured as a multi-branch form of government. The 3 county commissioners are the “executive branch,” which is responsible for the day to day operations in both fiscal and policy matters. The county delegation, made up of the elected members of the House of Representatives from that county, is responsible for the budget appropriations for the operation of county government.

The original county functions were transportation (roads), recording of land records, law enforcement and judicial. There are now 10 counties and county government function has evolved. The courts are now a state system and roads are either state or municipal. Over time the counties picked up various different functions. County governments today are financially responsible for some of the highest cost services provided in the state – long-term care and corrections.

County government is responsible under state law for funding the long-term care and support for those individuals who are Medicaid eligible financially and also medically eligible for nursing home level of care who reside in a county nursing facility (about 1750) or private nursing facility (about 2650 more) or cared for at home under the Choices for Independence program. In addition, under state law counties must operate county jails (or contract with other facilities for placement of county inmates, male or female) where approximately 2,500 inmates are incarcerated either pre-trial or under sentence. There are over 40,000 inmates who are incarcerated in the county correctional facilities over the course of a year.

County functions also include the funding and operation of the offices of the constitutionally elected Register of Deeds, County Attorney, Sheriff and County Treasurer. Beyond that there are various functions that individual counties are engaged in that differ county to county across the state and that depend upon local decision making by commissioners and/or the delegation if funding is required. Most counties also have Human Resources Offices which oversee personnel issues relating to the almost 5,000 county employees statewide (full-time, part-time, per-diem, and on-call).

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

The New Hampshire Association of counties represents the interests of County government in New Hampshire. The organization is a broad, state-wide Association, which includes the thirty elected County Commissioners, as well as other elected County officials. In addition, the Association membership includes the professionals and staff who run County government. The Association’s activities include providing coordinated training programs, supporting inter-governmental relations with state and municipal officials and acting as a clearing house for information and best practices which relate to the efficient operation of County government

## OUR AFFILIATES

The Association is organized around Affiliate/Associate groups that represent the various and wide-reaching services found in New Hampshire’s County government. The Affiliates are: County Commissioners, Registers of Deeds, County Attorneys, County Nursing Home Administrators, County Corrections Superintendents, County Human Services Administrators and County Human Resources Administrators. Associate members include the UNH Cooperative Extension.

## OUR OFFICERS

- President** . . . . . **George Maglaras**  
*Strafford County Commissioner*
- Vice President.** . . . . . **Tom Brady**  
*Coos County Commissioner*
- Clerk** . . . . . **Tom Tombarello**  
*Rockingham County Commissioner*
- Treasurer** . . . . . **Les Hammond**  
*Merrimack County Treasurer*
- Immediate Past President** . . **Bronwyn Asplund-Walsh**  
*Merrimack County Commissioner*

## NHAC STAFF

- Ronald R. White, Executive Director  
[rwhite@nhcounties.org](mailto:rwhite@nhcounties.org)
- Peggy Danis, Administrative Director  
[pdanis@nhcounties.org](mailto:pdanis@nhcounties.org)

## THE NEW HAMPSHIRE “COUNTY CONVENTION”

THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY DELEGATION



**Association of Counties**



## NEW HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

46 Donovan St., Concord, NH 03301

(603) 224-9222 - Phone

(603) 224-8312 - Fax

[www.nhcounties.org](http://www.nhcounties.org)

# THE "COUNTY CONVENTION"

## THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY DELEGATION

**Members of the House wear two hats:  
A state hat and a county hat.**

Individuals who sign up to run for the House sign an affidavit that includes a statement acknowledging that service includes being a delegate to the county convention.

Under NH law the members of the House of Representatives from each county are the legislative body of county government as well as the legislative body of state government. The law refers to the groups as the "county convention." Most others refer to the group as the "county delegation."

The county delegation is responsible for appropriating the funds necessary to support the functions of county government. This role, while not always as visible as the state legislature, is in many ways more directly responsible for public spending.

County conventions convene in early December, shortly after the members are sworn in as members of the House, for the purpose of organizing and electing a delegation chair, vice-chair and clerk. The full delegation meets annually to vote on county budgets as prepared and recommended by the county commissioners. Additional delegation meetings can be called to act on specific revenue or expenditure issues and many delegations also organize long-term planning, facilities and other subcommittees to work on specific county functions.

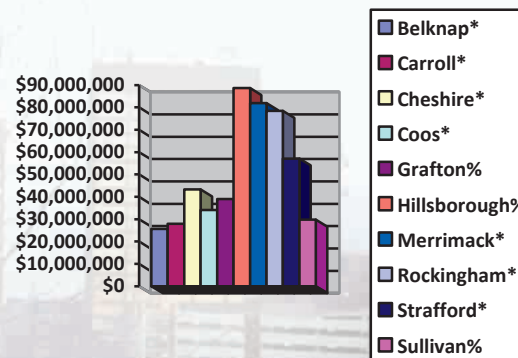


# COUNTY OPERATING BUDGETS

County government raises and spends approximately \$490 million per year. Because counties differ so greatly in geography and population the individual county budget amount ranges from Belknap County with an annual budget of about \$26 million to Hillsborough County's approximate \$89 million annual budget.

County expenditures fund a broad range of programs mandated by state law including, but not limited to, the non-federal share of the long-term care Medicaid program for seniors in county and private nursing homes (the largest expense) and in the choices for independence program (home care), county attorney's offices, county jails, county sheriff's offices and the county register of deeds offices. As county commissioners know and county delegation members learn, county budgets are often plagued by the cost shift of state expenses from the state budget to county government which forces county government officials to fund the costs through the county property tax.

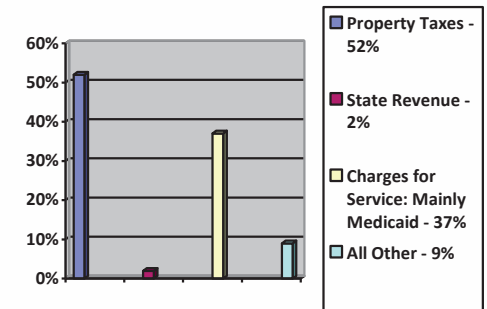
More than 50% of county revenue comes from the county property tax, which is based on local property valuation and is collected by the municipality and remitted to the county. Other revenue sources accounting for the balance include Medicaid and Medicare payments to the nursing homes, document filing and sheriff's fees, etc., however many of the payments and fees collected do not fully cover the expense of the functions required of county government.



\* Based on figures for Calendar Year 2015  
% Based on figures for Fiscal Year 2016

# NEW HAMPSHIRE COUNTY GOVERNMENT FINANCES AT A GLANCE

## % OF TOTAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT REVENUE



## % OF TOTAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

