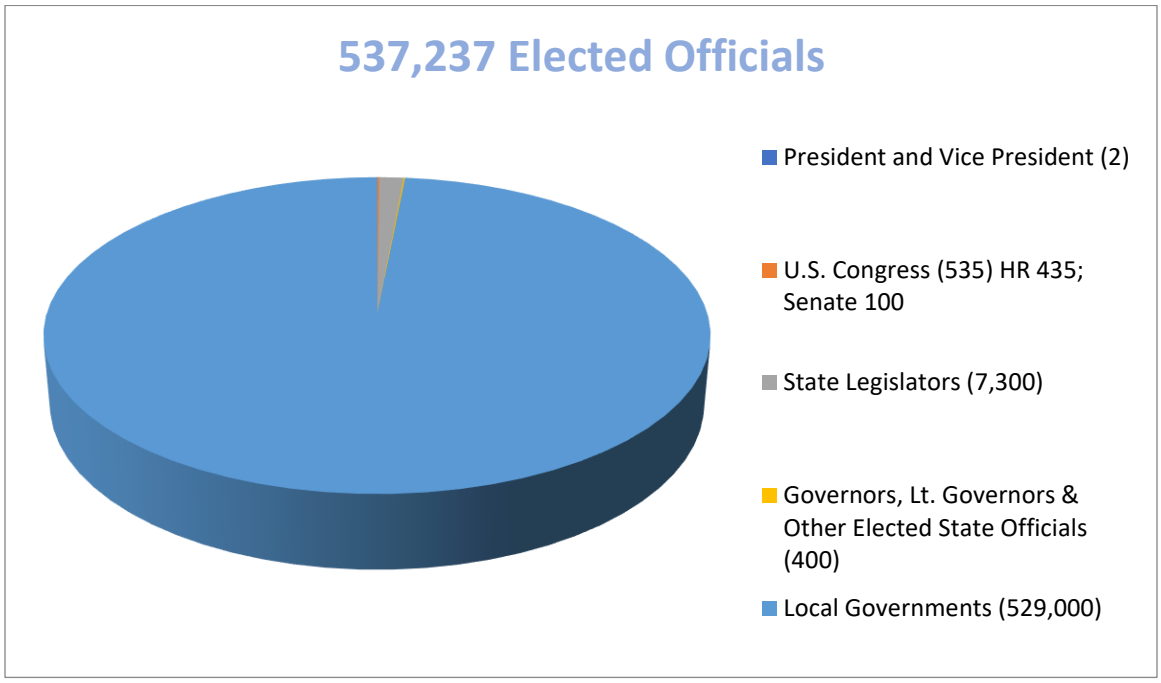
State and Local Governments

- Instructors of civic classes teach that the divisions of our legislative branches of government vary slightly around the nation.
- State government often reflects the federal government in structure. A governor and lieutenant governor, cabinet positions, state elected or appointed officers such as the attorney general, elected legislators and a variety of state agencies administer the state's services. Each of these people has a specific role within state government.
- Local government is comprised of municipal government and county government. The names may differ, but the basic functions remain intact. Municipal government provides incorporated areas with city-related services such as law enforcement (city police) and city election services. County government provides unincorporated areas with similar services including law enforcement (sheriff's department) and statewide election services.
- All the aforementioned government entities possess taxing authority. Funds collected support the services and projects of each entity. The ultimate responsibility for any service or project falls under the entity with jurisdiction over its line item in the budget. For example, if the city is building a new airport and has increased city tax to finance it, then the airport is likely to be included in the budget of the city government and not the state or county. Consequently, if such an issue were to be addressed (e.g., organizing an effort to fight an onerous tax), it would be crucial to approach the "correct" legislators utilizing suitable tactics.
- To request information about a state's legislative or budgetary process, call, or address correspondence to your state's Secretary of State's office, following the same procedure for each local government entity. A great deal of research may also be conducted online or at the public library.
- This document serves as a solid foundation upon which to begin building relationships with elected officials.



The chart shows that local government elected officials clearly outnumber state and federal officials.

How to find State and Local Government Information:

State Government Information:

State websites provide the most information at your fingertips. There is no consistent URL stream for the State Legislature websites, except that they are typically a .gov site. Go to your online search engine and key-in the "state" name you want to research and the word "legislature" (e.g. Arizona legislature and we find www.azleg.gov). Typically, the first few websites found will be the one you're looking for. State Legislature sites typically enable you to search your state and local officials by zip code, search bills and serve as the official site for state legislative information.

Local Government Information:

Similarly, county websites provide the most information for local governments. County government website URL streams typically have the county name followed by the state name abbreviated followed by .gov. Go to your online search engine and key-in the "county" name you want to research and the word "government" (e.g. Placer County government and we find www.placer.ca.gov). County government sites typically provide a complete list of Board of Supervisors and County Committees and Commissions. Research the committees and commissions that affect your industry or personal concern. For example, business travel and meeting professionals may want to look into what is currently being done by the Transportation Planning Committee, Economic Development Board, or Planning Committee.

More Web Tools:

State Legislators – www.ncsl.org

This is the official site for the National Conference of State Legislatures. It provides public users access to many reports on issues, research, state and federal committee news, and is a gateway to state Legislative Websites (found in the Resources & Directories tab). Here you can search a "state" and "content" (e.g. Issue Reports, or Bills).

The United States Conference of Mayors – www.usmayors.org

This is the official site for the United States Conference of Mayors. It provides access to news, reports, best practices, issues research, and mayoral news. Under the Legislation, they have subsections on; tourism, arts, parks, entertainment and sports, transportation and communications, and community and economic development.

Vote-Smart – www.votesmart.org

Get the facts – not politics. This site is a non-partisan database that provides biographical information, voting records, position statements on issues, campaign finance and evaluations of public officials and candidates running for public office.