

Forms of County Government

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County Facts

- ▶ Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments (shires) were established in Virginia
- ▶ Counties function differently according to state and even within each state
- ▶ Nationally, there are 3,142 county governments
- ▶ Largest Population County: Los Angeles County, CA
- ▶ Smallest Population County: Kalawao County, HI
- ▶ At 159, Georgia has more counties than any other state except for Texas, which has 254

Georgia Counties

- ▶ 159 counties
- ▶ 8 consolidated governments
- ▶ 816 county commissioners
- ▶ Size of county commissions range from 1 member to 11
- ▶ 6 forms of government
- ▶ Largest Population: Fulton
- ▶ Smallest Population: Taliaferro



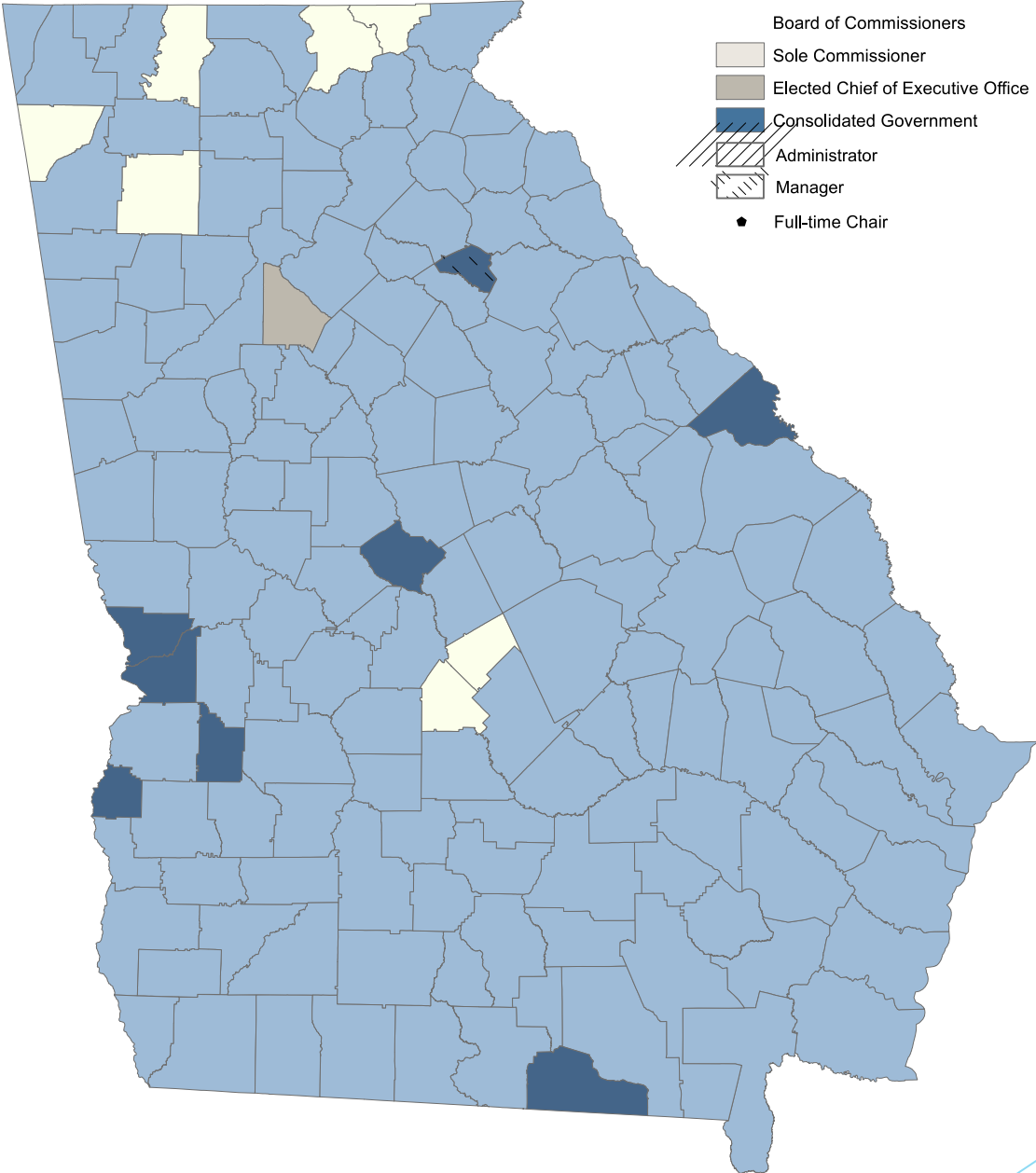
Forms of Government

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect. The rest of the background is plain white.

Forms of Government

- ▶ Traditional/ Board of Commissioners
- ▶ Sole Commissioner
- ▶ Manager
- ▶ Administrator
- ▶ Elected Executive
- ▶ Consolidated

County Government Structure





Policymaker and Executive Roles

▶ Policymaker: Enabling

- ▶ A county governing authority is acting in the role of a policymaker when it performs legislative actions and functions of government.
- ▶ Examples: Adoption of county zoning and land use ordinances, the county's annual budget, county personnel policy, etc.

▶ Executive: Implementing

- ▶ A county governing authority is acting in an executive role when it performs the administrative responsibilities and duties necessary for the daily operations of county government.
- ▶ Examples: Implementing county policies and priorities as described and funded in the annual county budget.



Traditional/Boards of Commissioners

- ▶ The Traditional format combines the primary policy making and executive responsibilities and gives them to the board of commissioners
- ▶ While the policy making function is performed as the board collectively, the executive function can vary:
 - Give functional assignments (function, dept, set of depts.) to individual commissioners. May include hiring department heads for certain functions.
 - Supervise by committees-Committees made up of members of the board of commissioners are responsible for the supervision of certain departments or functions
 - Supervise by entire board
 - Have the chairperson to handle day-to-day executive duties

Traditional Commission

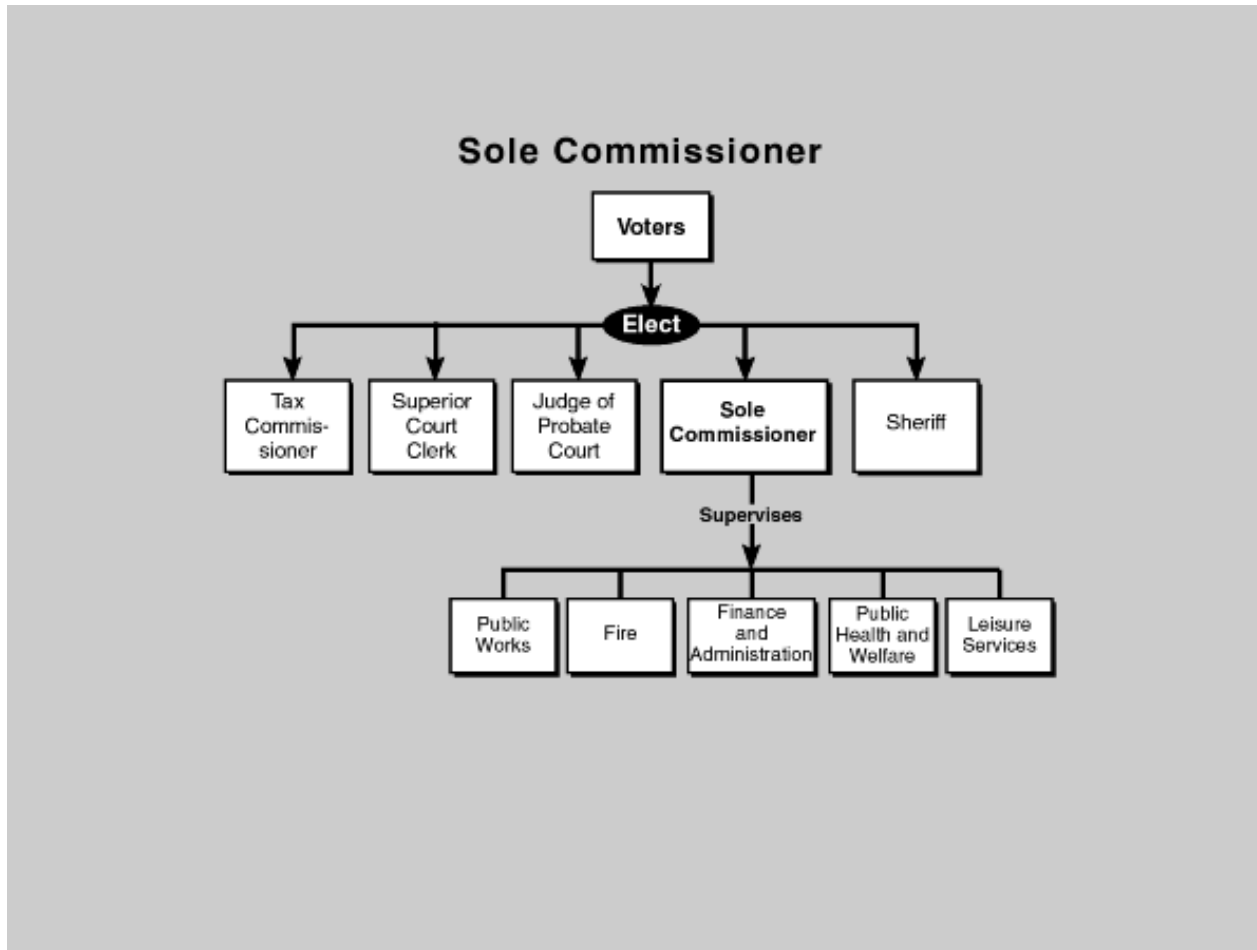
- ▶ The traditional commission form of government is used by 27 counties
- ▶ Boards operating under this format have 3-7 members with 5 members being the most common
- ▶ 20 have full time chairs.
- ▶ Counties that use this form of government range in population from Taliaferro County with a population of 1559 people to Clayton County with a population of 297,595



Sole Commissioner

- ▶ This form is similar to the traditional commission, except that instead of having a board with these powers, it rests solely with one individual
- ▶ The sole commissioner has full policy making and executive responsibilities
- ▶ There are 7 counties that have the sole commissioner form of government
- ▶ 4 of the sole commissioner counties also employ county managers to help with the executive function
- ▶ Counties that use this form of government range in population from Pulaski County with a population of 9855 to Bartow County with a population of 108,901

Sole Commissioner Form

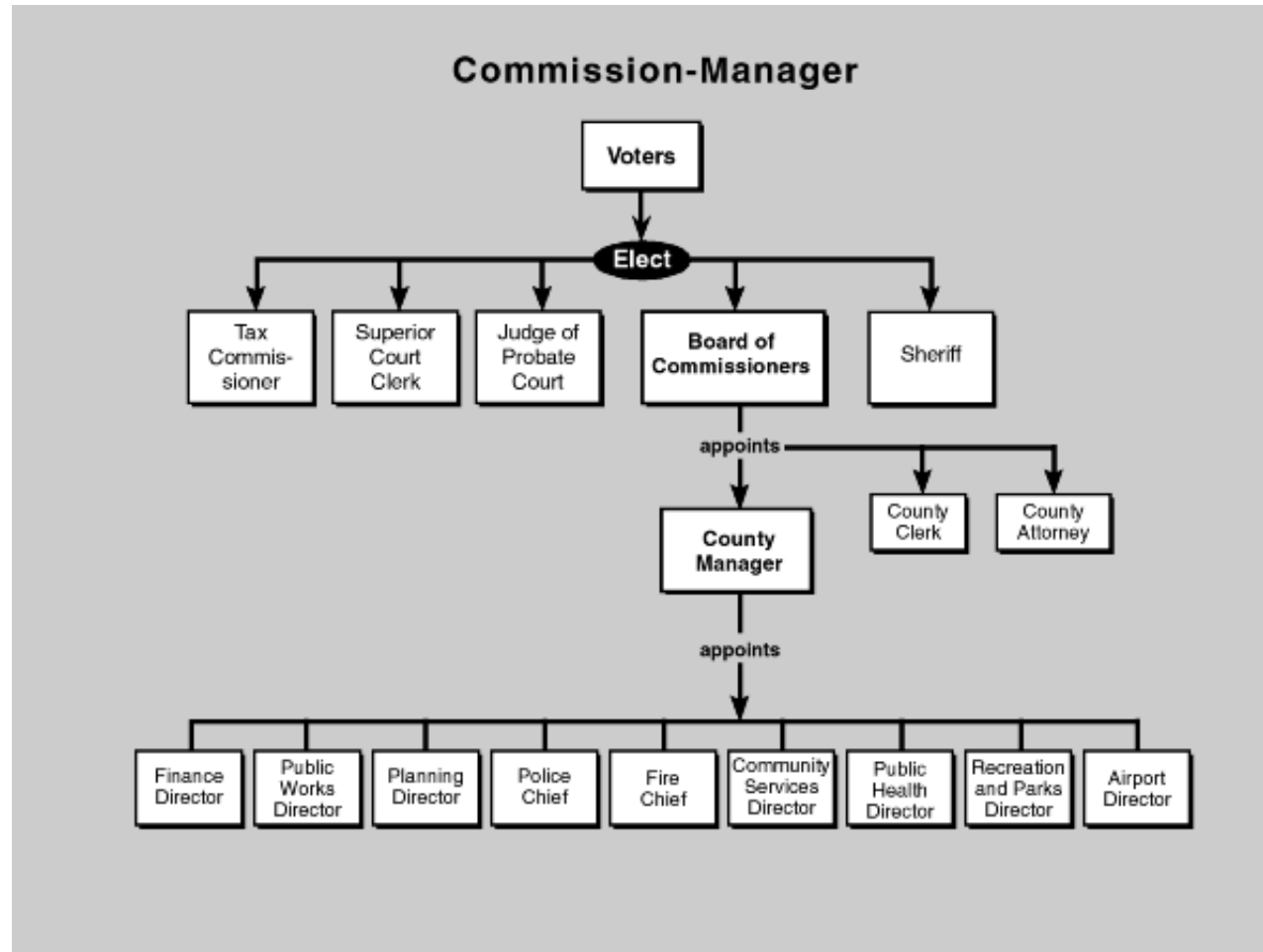




County Manager

- ▶ In the county manager form of government, the board of commissioners fills the primary policy making role and oversees the executive functions of the county but assigns the day-to-day duties of the executive role to a manager selected by the board.
- ▶ The manager is granted substantial executive authority such as the ability to hire and fire department heads and preparation of the budget.
- ▶ Manager reports to the full board of managers rather than a single officeholder.
- ▶ 65 counties have this form of government
- ▶ Boards operating under this form of government on average have a 5-member board
- ▶ Counties with this form of government range from Baker County with a population of 2876 to Fulton County with a population of 1,066,710

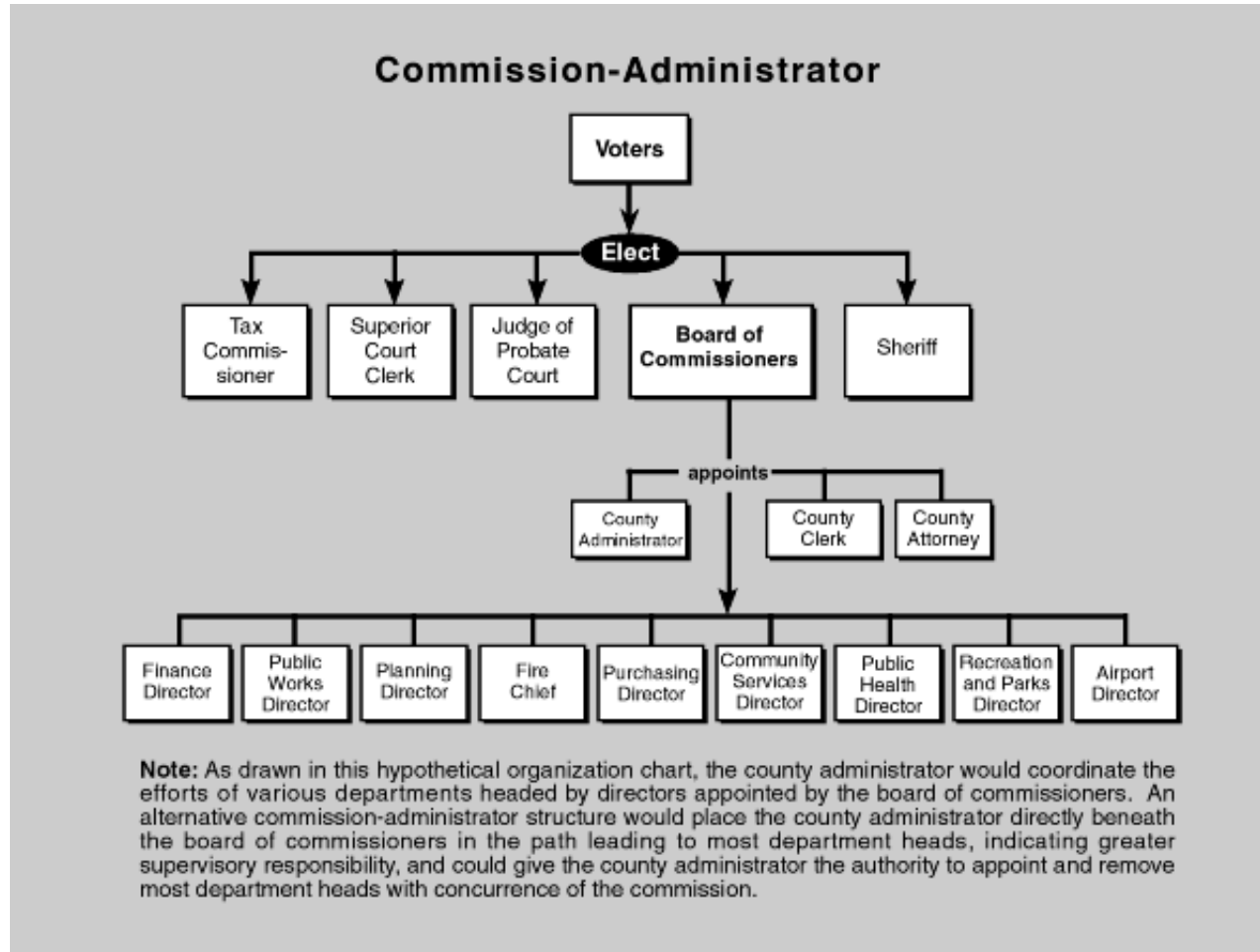
County Manager Form



County Administrator

- ▶ Under the administrator form of government, the boards of commissioners ultimately have the responsibility for policy making and executive functions of county government but has advisory assistance through the policy role and substantial administrative assistance in the executive role through the appointment of a county administrator.
- ▶ The type of authority granted to the administrator varies by county, but is generally more limited than that provided to county managers.
- ▶ Generally, the administrator has authority over department heads and budget preparation is limited with a substantial role in these processes reserved for the commissioners.
- ▶ The board has the power to appoint or remove the administrator, although in some cases the chair may have this power.
- ▶ 59 counties in Georgia have this form of government.
- ▶ Boards operating under this form of government on average have a 5-member board
- ▶ Counties with this form of government range in population from Gwinnett County with a population of 957,062 to Clay County with a population of 2848

Administrator

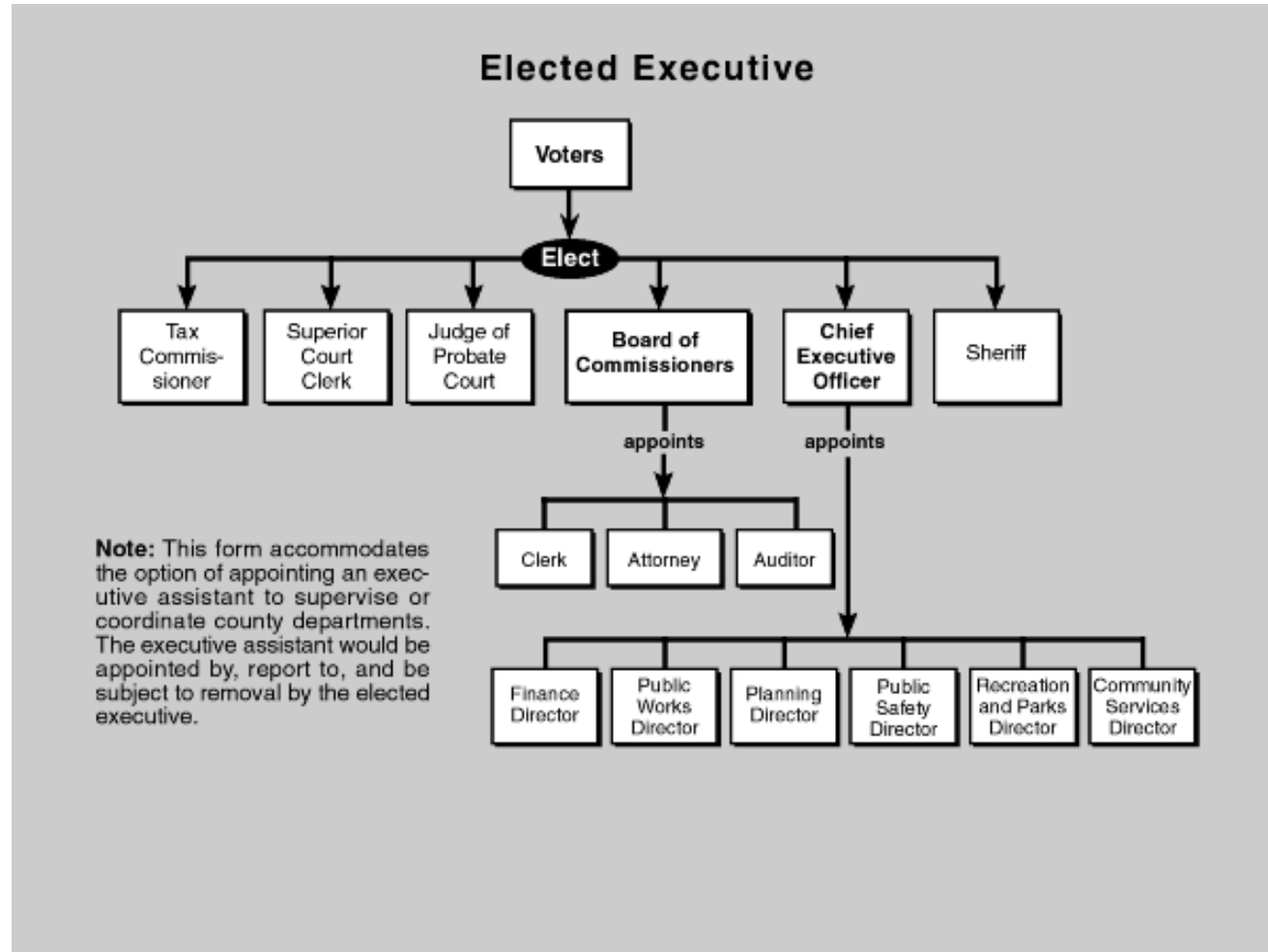




Elected Executive

- ▶ This form of government is similar to the separation of powers structure of the state government
- ▶ The board of commissioners performs the policy making functions of government while the county executive officer (CEO) heads the executive branch
- ▶ The CEO can be given limited or extensive powers. This is similar to the strong and weak mayoral form of government. If the CEO is given extensive powers he or she could have the power to appoint and remove department heads and to develop the county budget and may can veto acts of the boards of commissioners
- ▶ Under the limited or “weak” executive model, the CEO may be required to receive board approval to appoint or remove department heads, may only coordinate the budget process, and may not have veto power

Elected Executive



Consolidated Government

- ▶ Consolidated government represents a type of county government in which the traditional governmental powers and functions that are vested in one or more cities are combined, or consolidated, with the traditional governmental powers and functions of the county
- ▶ There are 8 consolidated governments in Georgia ranging in population from Georgetown-Quitman County at 2235 to Columbus-Muscogee County with 206,922



Consolidated Governments

- ▶ There are currently four ways to consolidate governments:
 - Direct creation by local Act.
 - Charter commission
 - Alternative method under general law
 - County consolidation when no city exists.

Form of Government Change

- ▶ The Georgia Constitution provides that each county must have a governing authority
- ▶ The governing authority of every county in Georgia, regardless of the form of government, is established in a local Act.
- ▶ Changing the form of government requires a local act passed by the General Assembly.
- ▶ The local Act should define its operations, powers, and limitations.

Questions?

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