

**GET INVOLVED IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS!**

Andrea Benjamin

**“All politics are local.”**

Congressman Tip O'Neil, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

**LOCAL POLITICS IS THE BEST POLITICS**

# LOCAL POLITICS

- Paradox of American politics: the importance of local politics and government is not reflected in the interest and voter turnout it generates.
- Local government controls a number of issues most immediately affecting people.
- Municipal waste, public utilities, and zoning, are all handled locally.



# LOCAL POLITICS

- Reform Era: Two-Thirds of Municipal Elections are non-partisan.
- Off year Elections (Pros and Cons)



# THE RIGHT TO GOVERN

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- From where do local governments or municipalities (villages, towns, boroughs, cities, and counties) derive their power to govern?
- Local governments are granted permission to govern **by the state government.**

# THE RIGHT TO GOVERN

## → Municipality

- ◆ Villages, towns, boroughs, cities, or counties that have state charters of incorporation and self-government.

## → Charter

- ◆ A charter is the organizing document of a municipal government. It is authorized by a state, and its sets out the purpose, powers, and organization of that government. It is the fundamental law of the municipal government.





# THE RIGHT TO GOVERN

- Clinton v. Cedar Rapids and the Missouri River Railroad in 1868 that local governments were created by states and could be destroyed by states.
- As such, local government power was limited to powers explicitly given to it by the state, powers implied in the state authorized charter, and powers necessary for the local government to exercise its declared purposes.

# THE RIGHT TO GOVERN

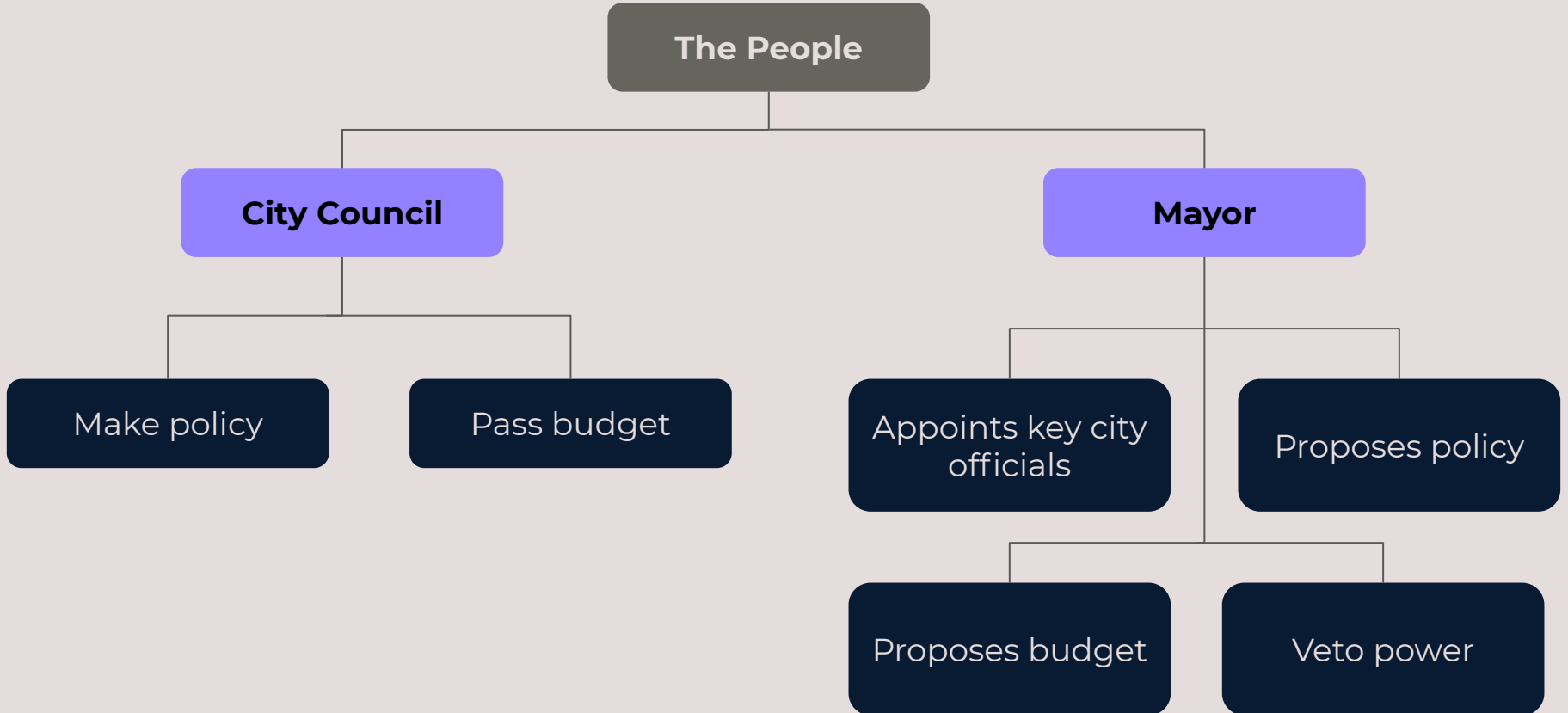
- Dillon's Rule presumes that any gray or ambiguous area between local power and state power should be resolved in the favor of the state (40 States)
- Home Rule: Local governments have the right to self-govern within the limits of the state and U.S. Constitution and do not have the strict limitations placed upon them that they would have under Dillon's Rule. (10 States)

# **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES**

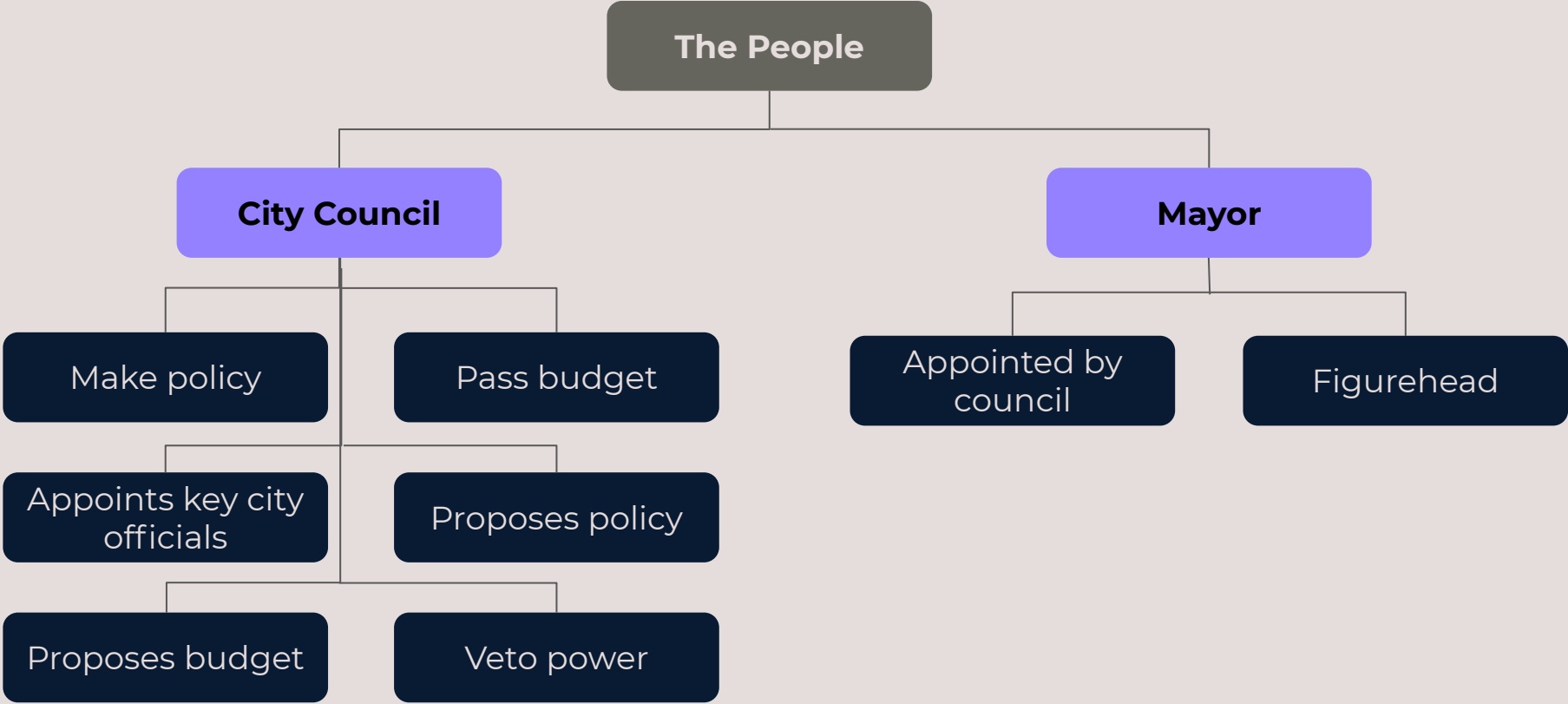
# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

- Types of major municipal organizational structures used across the United States.
  - ◆ Mayor-Council
  - ◆ Council-Manager
  - ◆ City Commission (included, but rare)
- All of them have elected officials who deliberate and make ordinances.
- County Government

# STRONG MAYOR-COUNCIL



# WEAK MAYOR-COUNCIL



# COUNCIL-MANAGER SYSTEM



**The People**

**City Council**

**Boards & Commissions**

**City Manager**

City Manager's Office

Finance Department

Fire Department

Human Resources Department

Information Tech. Department

Legal Department

Neighborhood Services Dept.

Planning & Development Dept.

Police Dept

Public Works Department

Library Board of Trustees

Champaign Public Library

METCAD Policy Board

METCAD 9-1-1

# CITY COMMISSION

**The People**

```
graph TD; A[The People] --- B[Commissioner at large]; A --- C[Commissioner at large]; A --- D[Commissioner at large]; A --- E[Commissioner at large]; A --- F[Mayor];
```

**Commissioner  
at large**

**Commissioner  
at large**

**Commissioner  
at large**

**Commissioner  
at large**

**Mayor**



# CITY COMMISSION

**The People**

```
graph TD; A[The People] --- B[Commissioner of Parks and Recreation]; A --- C[Commissioner of Health]; A --- D[Commissioner of Public Works]; A --- E[Commissioner of Finance]; A --- F[Commissioner of Public Safety];
```

**Commissioner  
of Parks and  
Recreation**

**Commissioner  
of Health**

**Commissioner  
of Public  
Works**

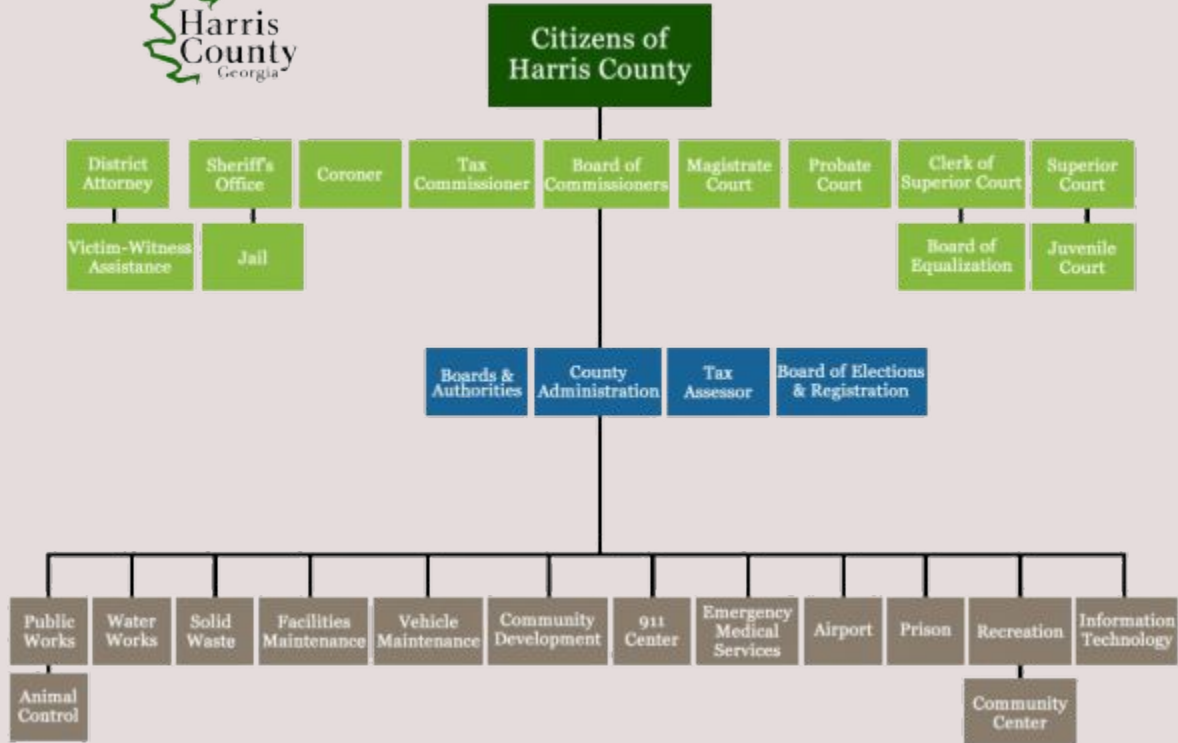
**Commissioner  
of Finance**

**Commissioner  
of Public Safety**

# COUNTY GOVERNMENT

- Larger geographical area than cities and towns, but a smaller area than states
- Get their charter from the state government
- Sheriffs
  - ◆ Requirements for the job? It depends.
  - ◆ Duties: In many places their job is similar to a police chief.
  - ◆ In rural areas, Sheriffs are the law enforcement.
- District Attorneys (D.A.s)
  - ◆ Conduct Grand Jury Investigations.
  - ◆ Decide Whether to Prosecute.
  - ◆ Investigate Evidence.
  - ◆ Offer Plea Bargains.
  - ◆ Conduct Trials.
  - ◆ Litigate Appeals.

# COUNTY GOVERNMENT



# TAKING A STEP BACK: VOTER TURNOUT

**VOTER TURNOUT IN 2020:**

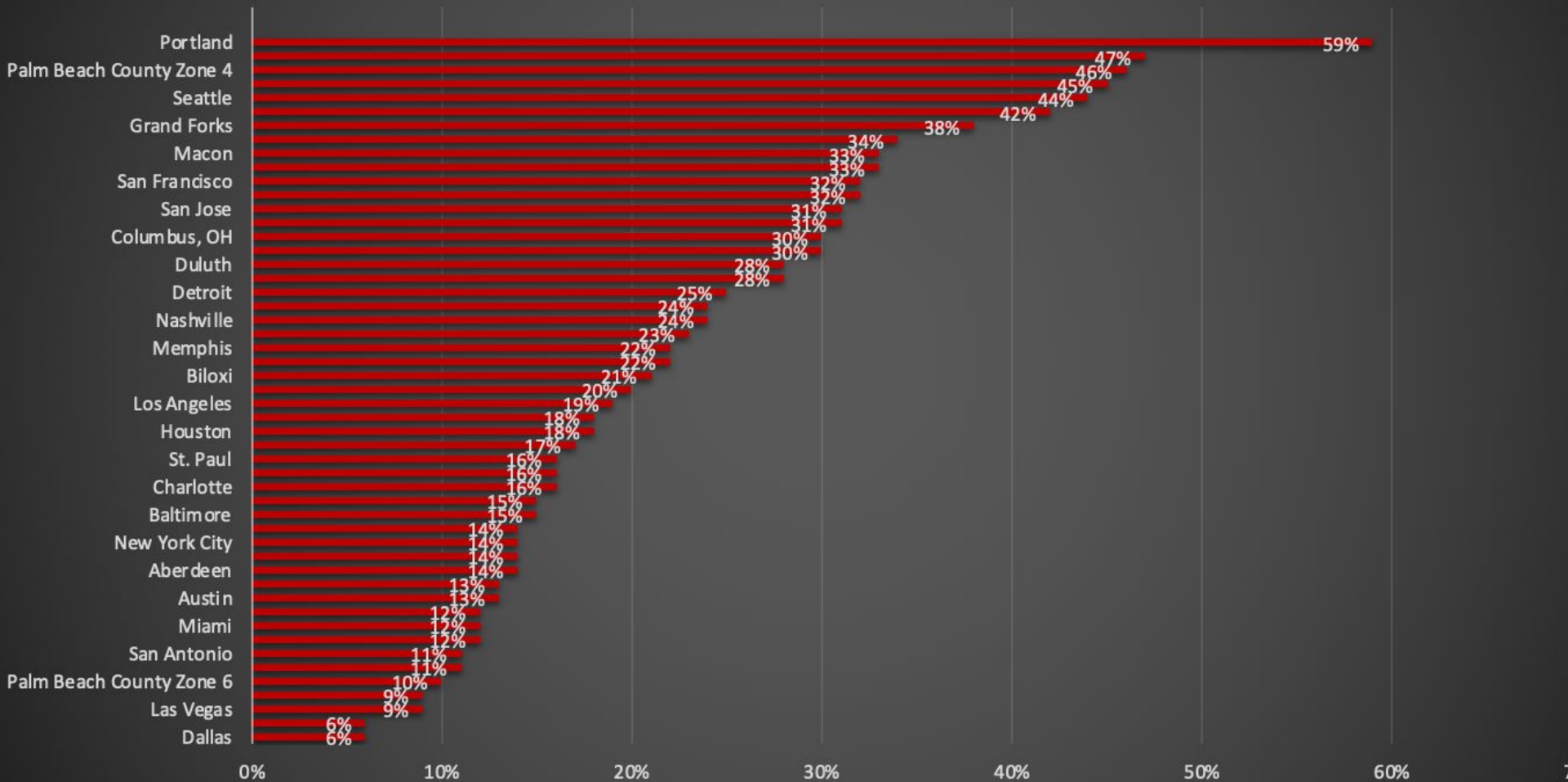
**66.3%**

**VOTER TURNOUT IN 2020:**

**66.3%**

**Local elections are not as popular...**

# Eligible voter turnout in most recent mayoral election



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT = ACCESS

- City Council Meetings
- County Commissioner Meetings
- School Board Meetings



# LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 2021

- Ballotpedia has a list of the Municipal Elections in 2021 in the Largest 100 Cities in the US: [ballotpedia.org/United\\_States\\_municipal\\_elections,\\_2021](https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_municipal_elections,_2021)
- State Board of Elections.
- Secretary of State.
- Google: City/Town name and Local Elections!



# LOCAL VOTER TURNOUT: GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

- Already doing the work.
- Trust.
- Accountability.
- Ability to meet the community where they are.
- Ability to mobilize voters.
- Who are the organizations on the ground already doing the work?
  - ◆ Find ways to partner and support.

# **LOCAL POLITICS:**

## **HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?**

- Run for Office!?!
- Participate in Local Politics!
- Elections (Be a Local Voter)!
- Support Local Candidates!
- Become a Poll Worker!
- Boards and Commissions!
- Attending City Council Meetings!
- Contact City Council Members!

# Vot-ER: GET INVOLVED ACTIVITIES

Take 5 Minutes and answer these questions (you can use your phone/computer to look it up)!

Who is your **state senator**? \_\_\_\_\_

When is their next election? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is your **state representative**? \_\_\_\_\_

When is their next election? \_\_\_\_\_

# Vot-ER: GET INVOLVED ACTIVITIES

Take 5 Minutes and answer these questions (you can use your phone/computer to look it up)!

Who is your **mayor**?\_\_\_\_\_

When is their next election?\_\_\_\_\_

Who is your city **council-member**?\_\_\_\_\_

When is their next election?\_\_\_\_\_