



County Technical Assistance Service  
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

November 19, 2024

---

# Elections - Historical Notes

---

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website ([ctas.tennessee.edu](http://ctas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee  
County Technical Assistance Service  
226 Anne Dallas Dudley Boulevard, Suite 400  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
615.532.3555 phone  
615.532.3699 fax  
[www.ctas.tennessee.edu](http://www.ctas.tennessee.edu)

Table of Contents

<b>Elections - Historical Notes .....</b>	<b>3</b>
---	----------

# Elections - Historical Notes

## **Districts - Reapportionment**

The acts listed below have affected the civil districts in Lawrence County, but are no longer operative regarding elections.

1. Acts of 1835-36, Chapter 1, directed the General Assembly of Tennessee, subsequent to the adoption of the new 1835 State Constitution, to appoint suitable people as commissioners to lay out the civil districts in their respective counties according to the population count taken in 1833. Each county having 3,000, or more, qualified voters would have 25 civil districts, each county having between 2,500 and 3,000 qualified voters would have 20 civil districts, which was graduated down to the prescribed minimums. Two Justices of the Peace and one Constable would be elected in each civil district except the one containing the county seat where three Justices of the Peace and two constables were authorized. The commissioners must take full advantage of the natural topography in delineating the civil districts as well as population in each one. Resolution #3 on Page 196 of the Acts of 1835-36 appointed John Wasson, Ephraim H. Massey, Robert Brashears, Hugh C. McIntyre, and William McAllister, as the Commissioners for Lawrence County. Resolution #25, on Page 211, substituted Richard A. Massey instead of Ephraim H. Massey.
2. Private Acts of 1923, Chapter 698, rearranged the civil districts in Lawrence County by combining the 12th Civil District and the 13th Civil District into one, to be known as the New 12th Civil District. The Justices of the Peace would continue to serve until their terms expired, except new justices would be elected for the New 12th Civil District as soon as an election could be held.
3. Private Acts of 1933, Chapter 868, divided Lawrence County into new civil districts. The following districts remained unchanged: First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth. The old Seventh Civil District was abolished and a part of the old 12th Civil District was added to the Seventh District to form a new Seventh Civil District. The old 11th and the original 13th Civil Districts were combined to form a new 11th District. Justices of the Peace and Constables were to be elected from the new civil districts as they were herein described.
4. Private Acts of 1943, Chapter 1, abolished all fifteen civil districts in Lawrence County and established three new civil districts in their place. The new First Civil District was composed of the old Fifth, Eighth, and Tenth Civil Districts; the new Second Civil District included the old First, Second, Third, and Fifteenth Civil Districts; and the new Third Civil Districts contained the old Fourth, Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Civil Districts. The Act named James T. Crews, Joe M. Davidson, and Willie E. Whitten, as the Justices of the Peace, and J. Melvin Sutton and T. J. Dendy, as Constables, in the First Civil District; Thomas J. Jones and N. F. Hollis were the Justices, and W. L. Mason, as Constable in the Second District; and W. M. Lowthrop and Frank Williams, as Justices, and Bob McCrory, as Constable in the new Third Civil District, all of whom would serve under their present bonds until September 1, 1944, when their successors would assume office. All the offices of Justices of the Peace and Constable not established in this Act were abolished.
5. Private Acts of 1951, Chapter 1, expressly repealed Private Acts of 1943, Chapter 1, and restored all the civil districts in Lawrence County as they existed prior to the enactment of that statute. The Act named the Justices of the Peace for each District who would serve until their successors were elected and qualified. John H. Bates and Freemon Hollis were named as Justices for the First Civil District; S. E. Hollman and Hardy Williams, for the Second; Roy Owens and Jim Wilson for the Third, Grady Lindsey and Delmar Townsend for the Fourth; G. A. Lester and Lonzo Simpson for the Fifth; Alvie McGee and Harold Kilgo for the Sixth; W. T. Bryant and John Thomas Lutts for the Seventh; M. M. James, Murray Gallaher, and Joseph Kamarad for the Eighth; Charles Leighton and H. W. Brewer for the Ninth; Ray Stephens and Marion Sink for the Tenth; Odie Kerr and Mark Lowthrop for the Eleventh; G. W. Staggs and Jesse Shedd for the Twelfth; Chester Garland and Ernest Pennington for the Thirteenth; John Benson and Oscar Benefield for the 14th, and John Kelly and J. R. Story, Jr., for the Fifteenth Civil District.

## **Elections**

The following is a listing of acts for Lawrence County which affected the elective process, but which have been superseded or repealed. They are listed here for historical and reference purposes. Also referenced below are acts which repeal prior law without providing new substantive provisions.

1. Acts of 1819, Chapter 5, Section 13, was the legal authority to establish two precinct elections in Lawrence County, one at the house of Jacob Pennington and the other at the house of John Nall.
2. Acts of 1819, Chapter 69, apportioned the representation in the General Assembly of the State to 20 Senators and 40 Representatives. The Counties of Hickman, Lawrence, Wayne, and Hardin composed one Senatorial District whose votes would be counted at Vernon in Hickman County, and Lawrence County and Hickman County would jointly elect one Representative.
3. Acts of 1822, Chapter 1, divided Tennessee into 9 U. S. Congressional Districts. The Ninth District was made up of the Counties of Wayne, Hardin, Perry, Lawrence, Henry, Carroll, Henderson, Madison, and Shelby.
4. Acts of 1823, Chapter 47, set up eleven Presidential Electoral Districts in the State assigning the Counties of Lincoln, Giles, and Lawrence to the 9th Electoral District. The election would take place on the first Thursday in October, 1824, and the polls would be compared and counted at Pulaski in Giles County.
5. Acts of 1824, Chapter 1, established eleven Presidential Electoral Districts in the same way as the 1823 Act above except that the election was scheduled for the first Thursday and Friday in November, 1824.
6. Acts of 1825, Chapter 134, Section 2, made it the duty of the Sheriff of Lawrence County, or his Deputy, on the days appointed under the law to open and hold a separate election at Bell's Iron Works, on the Big Buffaloe River in Lawrence County under the same election laws applicable to the other elections.
7. Acts of 1826, Chapter 3, placed the Counties of Hickman, Lawrence, Wayne, Hardin, and McNairy into one of the twenty Senatorial Districts of Tennessee whose votes were to be canvassed at Waynesborough. Lawrence County, Wayne County, and Hardin County would share one State Representative.
8. Acts of 1827, Chapter 17, established eleven Electoral Districts for the Presidential Election which would occur on the second Thursday and Friday in November, 1828. The Counties of Lincoln, Giles, Lawrence, Hardin, and Wayne constituted the 8th Electoral Districts whose votes would be compared at Lawrenceburg.
9. Acts of 1832, Chapter 4, organized Tennessee into thirteen U. S. Congressional Districts. The Tenth Congressional District contained the Counties of Lincoln, Giles, Lawrence, Wayne, and Hardin.
10. Acts of 1832, Chapter 9, divided the State into fifteen Presidential Electoral Districts of which the 11th District included the Counties of Lincoln, Giles, and Lawrence.
11. Acts of 1833, Chapter 71, divided the State into 20 Senatorial Districts and 40 Representative Districts. The Counties of Hickman, Lawrence, Wayne, Hardin, and McNairy constituted one Senatorial District while Wayne County and Lawrence County would jointly elect one Representative.
12. Acts of 1833, Chapter 76, provided for a Constitutional Convention to be called consisting of 60 delegates who would be elected by popular vote on the first Thursday and Friday in March next, and convene in Nashville on the third Monday in May, next. Hickman County, Lawrence County, and Wayne County composed one District and would elect two delegates.
13. Acts of 1835-36, Chapter 39, provided for fifteen Presidential Electoral Districts in Tennessee. The Eleventh Presidential Electoral District contained the Counties of Lincoln, Giles, and Lawrence. The Electors would meet in Nashville to cast their votes for the President and Vice-President. The election for electors would be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, 1836.
14. Acts of 1839-40, Chapter 79, made each Congressional District in Tennessee to coincide with each Presidential Electoral District.
15. Acts of 1842 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 1, reapportioned Tennessee into 25 Senatorial Districts and 50 Representative Districts. The 20th Senatorial District consisted of the Counties of Hickman, Lawrence, Wayne, and Hardin where the votes would be certified at Waynesboro. Lawrence County would elect one Representative alone.
16. Acts of 1842 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 7, formed eleven U. S. Congressional Districts in the State. The Counties of Hickman, Maury, Giles, Lawrence, Wayne, and Hardin constituted the Sixth Congressional District.
17. Acts of 1851-52, Chapter 196, established ten U. S. Congressional Districts. The Seventh Congressional District in Tennessee was made up of the Counties of Giles, Lawrence, Wayne, Hardin, McNairy, Perry, Decatur, Benton, Humphreys, Hickman, and Lewis.

18. Acts of 1851-52, Chapter 197, assigned the Counties in Tennessee to the 25 Senatorial and the 50 Representative Districts in the General Assembly. The Counties of Giles, Lawrence, and Wayne were in one Senatorial District with the polls to be verified at Lawrenceburg. Lawrence County would elect one Representative alone.
19. Acts of 1865, Chapter 34, enacted in the post Civil War period, set up eight congressional districts in the State, placing the Counties of Lawrence, Wayne, Hardin, Decatur, Perry, Lewis, Maury, Hickman, Humphreys, Dickson, Montgomery, and Stewart in the 6th Congressional District.
20. Acts of 1869-70, Chapter 105 was the enabling legislation for a referendum to be held on the question of whether or not a constitutional convention would be called to be composed of 75 delegates who would be elected from the Senatorial and Representative Districts of the State. The said convention, if authorized, would convene in Nashville on the second Monday in January, 1870, to alter, amend, change, or rewrite the 1835 State Constitution.
21. Acts of 1871, Chapter 146, apportioned the representation in the State Legislature according to the 1870 Federal Census, and to conform to the new State Constitution of 1870. Lawrence County and Wayne County would share a Representative and join Lewis County and Giles County to form the Fifteenth Senatorial District.
22. Acts of 1872 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 7, divided Tennessee into nine U. S. Congressional Districts. The Sixth District included the Counties of Williamson, Maury, Giles, Lawrence, Wayne, Lewis, Hickman, and Dickson.
23. Acts of 1873, Chapter 27, added another U. S. Congressional District to the State. Of the ten U. S. Congressional Districts, the Seventh was composed of the Counties of Wayne, Lawrence, Giles, Lewis, Maury, Hickman, and Williamson.
24. Acts of 1881 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 5, fixed the number of State Senators in the General Assembly at 33 and the number of Representatives at 99 on a permanent basis.
25. Acts of 1881 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 6, apportioned the State in compliance with the additional number of Senators and Representatives authorized by the Act above. Lawrence County and Wayne County would share one State Representative and combine with Hardin County and Perry County to form the 23rd State Senatorial District.
26. Acts of 1882 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 27, rearranged the Tennessee Counties into ten U. S. Congressional Districts. The Seventh Congressional District was made up of the Counties of Williamson, Maury, Giles, Lawrence, Wayne, Lewis, Hickman, and Dickson.
27. Acts of 1891, Chapter 131, brought no change in the U. S. Congressional Representation by virtue of the 1890 Census nor changed any of the counties in the 7th Congressional District.
28. Acts of 1891 (Ex. Sess.), Chapter 10, provided in the reapportionment of the General Assembly that Lawrence County would elect one Representative alone, and join up with Giles County and Wayne County to form the 22nd Senatorial District.
29. Acts of 1901, Chapter 109, set up ten U. S. Congressional Districts in Tennessee, the same reflecting any changes brought about by the 1900 Federal Census. The Seventh U. S. Congressional District contained the Counties of Houston, Humphreys, Dickson, Hickman, Williamson, Lewis, Maury, Giles, Lawrence, and Wayne.
30. Acts of 1901, Chapter 122, divided the representation in the General Assembly. The 22nd Senatorial District had in it the Counties of Giles, Lawrence, and Wayne. Giles County, Lawrence County, Lewis County, and Wayne County would elect one Representative jointly in the Seventeenth District.
31. Private Acts of 1915, Chapter 378, declared the no registration of voters would be required, and all ballots would remain the same in Lawrence County in order to vote. No election booths needed to be provided to receive the ballots. The Commission would appoint one Receiver, three Judges, and two Clerks in each voting precinct, and the provisions of this Act would apply to all elections, National, State, County, and local in the County. All prior acts in conflict were repealed.
32. Private Acts of 1921, Chapter 195, amended Public Acts of 1917, Chapter 8, so as to exempt Lawrence County from the provisions of the above cited act which permitted absentee voters to vote by registered mail. This Act was repealed by Private Acts of 1923, Chapter 44.
33. Private Acts of 1925, Chapter 472, amended Acts of 1901, Chapter 122, so that Lawrence County and Maury County were each given one Representative alone in the General Assembly and Section 7 was changed to remove Lawrence County from the 17th Floterial Representative District, leaving Giles County, Maury County, Lewis County, and Wayne County in that District.
34. Private Acts of 1927, Chapter 504, amended Acts of 1890, Chapter 25, which required the

- registration of voters as a prerequisite to voting so as to bring Lawrence County within all its provisions.
35. Private Acts of 1937, Chapter 748, stated that in Lawrence County every person who duly registered and qualified himself, or herself, to vote in the 1936 November election would hereby be a duly registered voter in that Civil District and precinct so long as that person remained a resident of that area and reregistration would not be a condition precedent to voting so long as their residence remained there. Subsequent registrations would be conducted as the general law required.
  36. Private Acts of 1939, Chapter 360, established four voting precincts in the 8th Civil District of Lawrence County, (1) the Court House precinct, as described in the act, (2) the Buffalo Precinct, (3) the Depot Precinct, and (4) the Rosement Precinct with the authority being granted to the Quarterly Court to change the precinct boundaries as the need arose. All voters in these precincts must in the future vote in the precinct in which they resided. All persons were required to reregister in their home precincts for which the Registrars were to hold special periods of registration. This Act was to supersede any Act to the contrary.
  37. Private Acts of 1941, Chapter 397, regulated the registration of voters in Lawrence County by providing that every person who duly registered themselves to vote for members of the General Assembly in the November, 1940, election would be a registered voter in the Civil District or precinct in which they registered so long as such person remains a residence of such civil district or precinct. Re-registration would not be a condition to voting so long as the person's residence remains unchanged. The same would apply to those who had subsequently registered themselves in special, or other, elections in order to vote. Supplemental registrations would be held in accord with the terms of this Act. If one moved out of the precinct, then they would have to re-register in the precinct to which they had moved.
  38. Private Acts of 1943, Chapter 165, amended Private Acts of 1939, Chapter 360, by reducing the number of precincts in the 8th Civil District from four to two. One was the Court House Precinct covering the area described in the Act, and the other was the Depot precinct, also embracing the area described, and by including a provision that the registration books used in the Court House and Buffalo Precincts and those used in the Depot and Rosement Precincts would be used in the two remaining precincts.
  39. Private Acts of 1945, Chapter 153, amended Private Acts of 1941, Chapter 397, in Section One, by rewriting the fourth paragraph to provide that subsequent supplemental registrations would be held and conducted as now provided by law in advance of each general and special election and any person not otherwise registered might do so during these special times.
  40. Private Acts of 1945, Chapter 556, provided that in Lawrence County the compensation of Judges, Clerks, Officers, and Registrars, holding a general or primary election would be \$2 per day, for one day only. Registrars were to be paid \$2 for each day worked during the periods of registration.
  41. Private Acts of 1949, Chapter 798, authorized and established a permanent system of voter registration in all the civil districts and precincts in Lawrence County. Each voter, in addition to all the other legal requirements, must also register according to the terms of this Act, or they would not be allowed to vote. Registration must occur 20 days, or more, before the election. A person must be registered in the civil district of his residence to vote but one could vote in municipal elections on property rights. All voters who registered in supplemental registrations were to be registered only in the civil district in which they reside. Voters could vote only in the precinct in which they were registered. Registrations hereunder were continuous and permanent unless one, or more, of the six reasons listed in the Act occurred which would make one re-register. Certain prior registrations under prior acts were validated, and those individuals need not re-register.
  42. Private Acts of 1951, Chapter 173, repealed Private Acts of 1949, Chapter 798, and established a system of permanent voter registration. Each person had to be registered before being allowed to vote. All the registrations under prior laws were canceled and each voter must register anew. The Commissioners of Election would, at least ten days before any registration, publish in a newspaper the locations where one could register. An office must be maintained in the Court House where one could register to vote at any time. The Commissioners of Election were authorized to employ a Registrar or Registrars at Large. Provisions were also included which permitted one to register by mail under certain conditions. The Election Commissioners had to furnish the books, supplies, and all the materials for the registrations. The votes of all the people failing to comply with this Act would be subject to challenge.
  43. Private Acts of 1961, Chapter 288, stated that hereafter anyone who served as an election official

in any public election in Lawrence County would be paid \$5.00 for each day of his or her services. This Act was properly ratified by the Lawrence County Quarterly Court.

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu/private-acts/elections-historical-notes-81>