



March 10, 2025

Other Legal Authority

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (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,

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Reference Number: CTAS-755

In addition to statutory law, court cases and constitutional provisions provide guidance for county officials in determining what actions may properly be taken. The county mayor should be familiar with the local court system. When the chancellor or circuit court judge makes a determination in a case which affects a county's operation, the order of the court must be followed. If either party to the action disagrees with the court's determination, that party can appeal to a higher court. Decisions of the court of appeals or the Supreme Court are binding on all counties and must be followed. When a lower court in a judicial district gives a decision, it is not binding on other judicial districts; however, it is a good indication of what courts in other districts would hold in similar cases.

Constitutional provisions are written in general language. Normally, their application to local governments is determined by case law. A single court case or a series of cases on a particular constitutional provision form the case law on that issue.

The county mayor who is not a lawyer, and even those who have legal training, should work with the county attorney when interpreting the law, in determining the legal viability of a proposal, assessing county liability issues or the county mayor's duty in various situations.

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