

# *The People's Township*

In an age where bureaucratic sprawl and top-down governance dominate nearly every aspect of civic life, the concept of reclaiming “original jurisdiction” at the township level is not only revolutionary—it is a return to foundational American principles. The People’s Township is a movement rooted in the belief that legitimate authority flows not from state capitals or federal agencies, but from the people themselves, acting in unity and by consent. This effort draws on deep historical, legal, and moral roots, invoking the original framework laid out in landmark documents like the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the Ordinance of 1785, and the Michigan Constitution of 1835. These foundational laws established townships not as mere administrative outposts, but as sovereign political units with inherent authority to govern local matters—ranging from taxation and justice to infrastructure and welfare.

The people of a township, by gathering in assembly, declaring their intent, and forming a *de jure* governing body, can breathe life back into these dormant powers. This process echoes the early American town meeting model, where governance was direct, participatory, and untainted by layers of statutory overreach. It calls for the establishment of simple yet binding local constitutions, dispute resolution systems rooted in common law, and grassroots institutions answerable only to the residents they serve. Though this bold reclamation may face legal challenges, state resistance, or accusations of insurrection, its legitimacy rests on natural law and the historic precedent of communities that once governed themselves effectively without asking for permission.

By documenting their actions, forming coalitions with like-minded townships, and standing firm in the face of external pressure, modern-day citizens can restore the township as the true seat of authority—a bulwark against tyranny and a sanctuary for liberty. In this act of self-determination, the People’s Township becomes more than a place on a map; it becomes a living declaration of independence, forged not in rebellion, but in remembrance of the sovereignty that has always belonged to the people.

This is the mission of the Bay County General Jural Assembly: to restore, preserve, and exercise the original jurisdiction granted to the people of Bay County through historical precedent, natural law, and the foundational principles of self-governance. By assembling lawfully, reestablishing common law processes, and asserting *de jure* authority at the township and county levels, the Assembly seeks to reclaim local control from corporate and statutory systems that have overridden the will of the people. With unwavering commitment to truth, justice, and constitutional integrity, the Bay County General Jural Assembly stands as a beacon for lawful self-governance and the revival of American liberty—beginning at the most local level.

Reclaiming "original jurisdiction" at the township level implies restoring a form of authority that predates or supersedes the current legal framework-likely the direct, people-driven governance you associate with a de jure township system before state or federal overlays like charter townships. This is a bold move, rooted in both practical action and a claim to legitimacy. Here's how people might go about it:

## **Understanding "Original Jurisdiction"**

In legal terms, original jurisdiction refers to a body's inherent authority to govern or adjudicate, not delegated from above. For townships, this could mean asserting a natural or historical right to self-rule, arguing that their power stems directly from the people, not state charters or federal systems. You might be envisioning a return to a pre-centralized era-like early American townships under common law or colonial compacts-before modern governments imposed hierarchical control.

## **Steps to Reclaim It**



### **Assemble the People:**

Call a township-wide meeting, open to all residents. This echoes the old town meeting model where authority flowed from collective agreement. Publicize it widely-flyers, social media, word of mouth-to ensure broad participation.

Establish a quorum or consensus rule to legitimize decisions. Document who attends and what's agreed upon-written records bolster claims of authority.

## **Declare, Form, Establish, Build**

### **Declare Intent:**

Draft a resolution or compact asserting the township's original jurisdiction. Cite historical precedent (e.g., early township charters, natural rights, or the Declaration of Independence's principle of government by consent). For example: "We, the people of [Township], reclaim our inherent right to self- governance as exercised by our forebears." Announce it publicly to the township, county, state, even online to stake the claim and invite recognition or challenge.

### **Form a Governing Body:**

Elect or appoint a Board of Supervisors (or similar) answerable only to the People, not state law. Define its powers-taxation, ordinances, dispute resolution-based on local needs, not external charters.

Avoid relying on existing state-sanctioned structures if the goal is to bypass them. This body would operate as the township's de jure authority.

### **Establish Local Law:**

Enact basic rules or a township constitution, agreed upon by the People. Keep it simple property rights, public safety, resource management-to assert jurisdiction over daily life.

Set up a process for enforcement (e.g., a local court or arbitration panel) to handle disputes internally, rejecting outside interference unless invited.

### **Build Community Backing:**

Rally widespread support. The more residents who buy in-through votes, signatures, or active participation-the harder it is for higher authorities to dismiss. A unified township can function as a self-contained unit even under pressure. Prepare for dissent. Some may prefer the status quo; address their concerns to avoid fractures.

### **Defend the Claim:**

**Practically:** Start acting as if the township has jurisdiction-collect voluntary dues, manage local projects, resolve conflicts. Success breeds legitimacy.

**Lawfully:** If challenged by state or federal entities, argue that their de facto control lacks de jure basis if it overrides the people's consent. This could lean on philosophical grounds (Locke, Jefferson) or historical township autonomy, though courts might not agree.

**Physically:** In extreme cases, communities have resisted external overreach through non-compliance or mutual defense. This is risky and depends on how far people are willing to go.

**Spiritually/Morally:** At its core, reclaiming township jurisdiction is a moral imperative. It affirms the God-given right of free people to govern according to natural law and divine order. When government violates life, liberty, or property, the people have a duty to restore lawful authority rooted in truth, justice, and faith-honoring both the Creator and the legacy of those who secured our freedoms.

## Seek Recognition:

Connect with like-minded townships to form a network. Mutual acknowledgment strengthens the claim-think a confederation of self-governing units.

Petition higher bodies (county, state) to accept the township's jurisdiction, though this might compromise the "original" aspect if it implies delegated power.

## Challenges

**State Pushback:** States claim constitutional authority over municipalities (e.g., Dillon's Rule in many U.S. states says local power is granted, not inherent). Reclaiming original jurisdiction could be deemed illegal rebellion unless the state's de facto grip weakens.

**Federal Overreach:** Even if states falter, federal laws (e.g., commerce, taxation) could still apply unless the township opts for total independence—a tall order.

**Legitimacy Debate:** Critics might call it a power grab unless the process is transparent, inclusive, and tied to a clear moral or historical basis.

**Resources:** Self-rule needs funding and manpower. Without state or federal support, the township must be self-sufficient.

## When It Works

This could succeed if:

Higher governments collapse or lose enforcement power, creating a vacuum (e.g., post-crisis scenarios).

The township proves it can govern effectively-delivering order, services, justice-making external intervention unnecessary or impractical.

The People stand firm, unified, and resolute, echoing revolutionary acts like the Committees of Correspondence in 1770s America.

## Historical Echoes

This mirrors how early communities asserted autonomy-think Plymouth Colony's *Mayflower Compact* or *frontier towns forming governments before statehood*. The difference now is the entrenched legal web of modern systems. Reclaiming original jurisdiction would be a declaration of sovereignty, betting that practical success and moral clarity can outlast bureaucratic resistance

## Bottom Line

The People reclaim it by acting-gathering, declaring, governing, and defending their township as a sovereign unit. It's less about permission and more about possession: if they exercise jurisdiction and make it stick, it becomes real. Timing depends on opportunity (chaos above) and willpower below. It's a gamble, but history shows determined communities can pull it off when the old order falters. Michigan's township system, while part of the broader American tradition, has a distinct historical foundation tied to its status as a Northwest Territory state rather than a Northeastern colonial one. Its townships were heavily influenced by federal land policy and early statehood laws rather than the New England town meeting model or Middle Colony practices.

**Here are the key historical documents that serve as legal references for original jurisdiction at the township level in Michigan:**

**These laws are preserved in Michigan's territorial records**

**Northwest Ordinance (1787)** - This is the cornerstone for Michigan's township system. As part of the Northwest Territory, Michigan's land was surveyed into 6-mile-by-6-mile townships (36 square miles) under this federal law. It established local governance structures, granting townships original jurisdiction over basic administration, schools, and land allocation. Article 5 ensured orderly governance as territories became states, directly shaping Michigan's township framework.

**Ordinance of 1785** - Paired with the Northwest Ordinance, this established the Public Land Survey System, creating the township grid in Michigan. While primarily a land-division tool, it indirectly defined township jurisdiction by tying local authority to these geographic units, including responsibilities like maintaining roads and settling property disputes.

**Michigan Territorial Laws (1805-1837)** - After Michigan became a territory in 1805, its early statutes built on the Northwest Ordinance. For example, the 1827 Territorial Act organized townships with elected officials (supervisors, clerks, justices of the peace) who held original jurisdiction over local taxation, elections, and minor legal matters.

**Michigan Constitution (1835)** - Michigan's first state constitution, adopted upon statehood in 1837, formalized township governance. Article XI (Local Government) recognized townships as fundamental units with original jurisdiction over local roads, poor relief, and civil disputes under justices of the peace. This reflected the Northwest Territory's legacy rather than colonial charters.

**Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769)** - Though not unique to Michigan, this influenced the legal training of early Michigan justices of the peace, who operated at the township level. They had original jurisdiction over small claims (e.g., debts under \$100) and petty crimes, adapting English common law to a frontier context.

**Revised Statutes of Michigan (1838)** - Enacted shortly after statehood, these codified township powers, detailing their jurisdiction over local ordinances, property assessments, and misdemeanor cases. Chapter 16, for instance, outlined township officers' duties, cementing their role as the first level of legal authority.

**Township Organization Act (Michigan, 1846)** - This state law refined township governance, granting them broader authority over local infrastructure (e.g., bridges, highways) and public welfare. It reinforced their original jurisdiction by empowering township boards to enact bylaws enforceable at the local level.

### **In Conclusion:**

The path to reclaiming original jurisdiction is not merely a theoretical exercise—it is a living mission with practical implications and deep historical resonance. As the modern state grows increasingly detached from the will of the people, it becomes not only necessary but urgent to return to a model of governance where authority is grounded in local consent, moral clarity, and lawful assembly. The People's Township offers a powerful blueprint for that restoration, reminding us that sovereignty begins with the individual and extends outward through community action. In this spirit, the Bay County General Jural Assembly affirms that the work of reclaiming self-governance is already underway. Through education, lawful process, and community unity, we are laying the groundwork for a future where the people once again stand as the highest authority in their own townships—where liberty is protected, justice is restored, and the voice of the people resounds as the true law of the land.