

Roman Government Officials

Explanation

Out of the old Etruscan monarchy, the Roman Republic was founded in 509 B.C. With the Licinian-Sextian reforms of 346 B.C., the familiar structure of the Republic was put into place and continued basically unchanged past the end of the Republic and through the time of Augustus's principate. The organization of government officials in the Roman Republic is represented in chart 4-3.

Though magistrates were elected by various citizen assemblies, most of these individuals were members of the Senate, a body of elected or hereditarily appointed officials who served for life. In tandem with the Senate, the Republic's magistrates expanded a city-state to an empire that spanned the known world.

As the instruments and machinery of the Republic became archaic and inadequate for the administration of the far-flung empire, changes were effected that ultimately produced the new governmental structures of the empire. The old magisterial offices were preserved but with different functions and modes of selection. Chart 4-4 represents the role of government officials under the empire during New Testament times.

References

Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

¹Discontinued during Augustus's principate.

²Includes the period of the principate of Augustus Caesar (27 B.C.–A.D. 14).

³Discontinued in A.D. 222.

Roman Government Officials of the Republic

| OFFICE | NUMBER | QUALIFICATIONS | TERM | ELECTED BY | DUTIES |
|---------------------|--------|---|---------|---------------------|--|
| Consul | 2 | Age 42 and 5 years since elected praetor | 1 year | Centuriate Assembly | <i>imperium</i> ; chief officer of state; presided over Senate and Centuriate and Tribal Assemblies; commanded armies; supervised all other officers and governors |
| Praetor | 8 | Age 39 and 5 years since elected quaestor | 1 year | Centuriate Assembly | <i>imperium</i> ; judicial official; presided over courts; could command armies |
| Aedile | 4 | previously quaestor | 1 year | Tribal Assembly | city commissioner; had limited power to regulate business, police, fire, sewer, water, and other public works in Rome |
| Quaestor | 16 | Age 30 | 1 year | Tribal Assembly | financial official in Rome or provinces; oversaw treasury and tax collection |
| Tribune | 6 | none | 1 year | Tribal Assembly | presided over Tribal Assembly; had veto power in Senate; could protect people from punishment by other officials |
| Censor ¹ | 2 | previously consul | 5 years | Centuriate Assembly | conducted census; placed new citizens in voting tribes; certified senatorial and equestrian ranks |

Chart 4-3

and of the Empire

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|----|---|--------|--------|---|
| Consul | 2 | Age 42 and 5 years since elected praetor | 1 year | Senate | presided over Senate; supervised other officials and Senate-appointed governors on a limited scale |
| Praetor | 12 | Age 39 and 5 years since elected quaestor | 1 year | Senate | judicial official; presided over courts |
| Aedile ² | 4 | previously quaestor | 1 year | Senate | city commissioner; had limited power to regulate business, police, fire, sewer, water, and other public works in Rome |
| Quaestor | 32 | Age 30 | 1 year | Senate | financial official in Rome or provinces |
| Tribune ³ | 6 | none | 1 year | Senate | had limited power to judicially protect citizens of Rome |