SUMMER 2025

COUNTY LEADER



FEATURING

State Operating Budget Invests in and Strengthens County Government

Ohio Leads Boldly into America's 250th Anniversary with County Partners at the Center

Stepping Up Ohio: A Decade of Transforming Mental Health and Criminal Justice









COVER:
CCAO members and staff at 2025 NACo Annual Conference.

ABOVE:
1: Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis and Congressman Dave Taylor at the White House Leadership Conference in Washington DC.

2: Harrison County Commissioners Amy Norris, Dustin Corder, Paul Prevot, Former Harrison County Sheriff Ronald J. Myers, Governor Mike DeWine, and Harrison County Sheriff Mark A. Touville at the new Harrison County Jail Ribbon Cutting Ceremony this past June.

3: Logan County Commissioner Joe Antram, State Representative Roy Klopfenstein, Defiance County Commissioner David Kern at OCCO Reception at the Statehouse.

4: Washington County Commissioner Charlie Schilling, Belmont County Commissioner J.P. Dutton, Noble County Commissioner Ty Moore, Monroe County Commissioners Diane Burkhart & Mitchell Schumacher, Morgan County Commissioners Heidi Maxwell & Cecil Mayle, Washington County Commissioner James Booth at the White House Leadership Conference in Washington DC.

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A MESSAGE FROM 2025 CCAO PRESIDENT



David Painter

CCAO President, Clermont County Commissioner

Leadership is often measured by the actions taken and the capabilities demonstrated by individual leaders. While personal skills and attributes are significant, the true essence of leadership lies in the collective achievements of an organization working together toward a common purpose.

The recent budgetary cycle in Columbus underscored the vital role county governments play in the lives of all Ohioans. County commissioners across the State of Ohio understand that their decisions directly influence the everyday wellbeing of the citizens they serve through services for children and families, support for seniors and individuals with disabilities, public safety and emergency management, and the operation of local jails and 9-1-1 systems.



President Painter traveled to Columbus to testify on legislation several time this spring. Pictured in the Ohio Statehouse map room.

TO COMMISSIONERS, COUNTIES MATTER.

Preserving county funding sources is crucial to maintaining high-quality services. Advocacy is not just valuable—it is imperative. It ensures that the voice of county government is not only heard but recognized as an essential part of Ohio's legislative landscape.

As commissioners and members of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, we must continue to lead with purpose, speak with conviction, and act in the best interests of the communities we represent.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Summer Symposium in Hocking Hills. I trust you'll find time not only to strengthen your leadership skills and gain new insights, but to forge meaningful connections with fellow commissioners who share your passion for service.

Let this gathering be more than a meeting; let it be a catalyst for new ideas, renewed commitment, and collective progress for the counties we serve.

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LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reforming for a Sustainable Future



Cheryl Subler
CCAO Executive Director

The conversation surrounding property tax reform has rightfully taken center stage in Ohio. At the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), we've recognized that Ohio's current property tax structure is no longer sustainable for property owners. Our members have strongly voiced this concern, and as a result, thoughtful property tax reform has become a key pillar of CCAO's legislative platform. These proposed changes include:

- Enhancing the state's homestead property tax credit for seniors and disabled homeowners;
- Limiting the growth of revenue for school districts at the 20-mill floor due to reappraisal changes;
- Empowering county auditors with final authority to determine valuations in a reappraisal process, subject to the approval of the county board of revision;
- Allowing county auditors to use a three-year average of comparable sales to determine valuations during a reappraisal or update;
- Eliminating the non-business credit and expanding the owner-occupancy credit;
- Creating a menu of targeted relief options, such as tax deferrals, a property tax "circuit breaker" program that limits payments to a specified percentage of household income, and potentially other measures.

This edition of *County Leader* highlights recent efforts to modify the property tax system through the state budget bill. It also spotlights the existing authority boards of county commissioners, county executives, and county councils have to reduce property taxes by rolling back inside millage for the county general fund.

Managing public funds is a responsibility elected officials take very seriously, as it is essential to providing the mandated and valued services residents and businesses expect and depend on. County leaders across the state are using this pivotal moment to re-examine how counties operate – internally and in partnership with public and private entities, especially the state. In today's environment, county officials are looking at both sides of the ledger – revenues and expenses – and asking: Are there ways to lower costs and operate more efficiently and effectively?

Last year, Erie County commissioners appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission to identify ways to reduce expenses and cut taxes. The idea, initiated by Commissioner Matt Old, followed two public forums on property revaluations and resulting tax increases. Moved by the concerns he heard from residents, Commissioner Old proposed a comprehensive review of local operations to explore opportunities for reducing expenses and improving services. Commissioners Pat Shenigo and Steve Shoffner, along with Treasurer Caleb Stidham, also supported the creation of the commission.

The Blue Ribbon Commission is comprised of seven current and former local government officials, school administrators, and business leaders from the Erie County area. The commission is charged with examining the operations of counties, municipalities, townships, villages, schools, and other taxing entities to identify duplications and recommend improvements, aiming for better service at a lower tax burden.

The Commission issued its report in June. The report combines recommendations on cost savings possibilities across 11 government functions, such as purchasing, education, safety services, and infrastructure, with advocacy that can be done at the state level to further empower local governments to reduce duplicative spending. The full report can be found on Erie County's website.

Additionally, CCAO's policy team and membership continue to lead discussions around operational efficiencies already reflected in our legislative priorities. This issue of County Leader also explores the pilot program included in the state budget bill for state-administered indigent defense in three counties.

As we look ahead, the counties that thrive will be those willing to reimagine the possible. By coupling legislative reform with internal innovation and by reinforcing partnerships with the state, public, and private sectors, counties can continue delivering essential services effectively, efficiently, and in strong partnership with the State of Ohio.

POLICY UPDATE State Operating Budget Invests in and Strengthens County Government



Kyle Petty
CCAO Managing Director of Policy

The state budget process is a long and winding road.

As the new year begins, CCAO members and staff advocate for county priorities to both the Executive Branch and the General Assembly to lay the groundwork for budget negotiations. After the Governor introduces the budget in February, the five-month odyssey formally begins. The budget takes even the most seasoned of commissioners and staff to new policy realms and debates, all while the pillars of county government require constant protection and reinforcement. At any point in the process, an unforeseen issue can emerge, which requires a coordinated advocacy effort among counties and our partners.

House Bill 96, the 136th General Assembly's operating budget, also Governor Mike DeWine's final budget, presented a fresh challenge for the state. With the depletion of the wealth of federal relief funding distributed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Inflation Reduction Act, the state returned to normalcy. The specter of federal assistance program cuts and simmering concerns about the state's property taxation system proved to add more elements of uncertainty to the process.

CCAO entered the budget cycle with several key priorities: bolstering the child welfare system, reforming the indigent defense system, ensuring a strong rollout of the Next Generation 9-1-1 system, continuing the state-county partnerships on county jails, and increasing access and capacity for childcare. As a result of the advocacy efforts between CCAO members and the CCAO staff, we made progress on these priorities.

CHILD WELFARE

The appropriation for the State Child Protection Allocation (SPCA) increased by $55 million over the biennium. This funding is distributed directly to county public children services agencies to support placement costs. The budget also requires the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) to issue a Request for Proposal to establish statewide rate cards for the placement and care of children, with foster caregivers and kinship caregivers exempted from the progress. The RFP process will provide transparency and consistency in placement costs around the state. The bill also provides $10 million in each year to fund startup costs for regional child wellness campuses to provide short-term crisis stabilization placements.

INDIGENT DEFENSE

The appropriation items that provide reimbursement to counties received modest increases compared to the previous biennium. The Ohio Public Defender's (OPD) office estimates that reimbursement will be in the low 80% range for SFY 2026, and in the high 70%-low 80% range for SFY 2027. Crucially, the budget includes funding for a pilot program (the Northwest Regional Hub) in which OPD will directly administer all aspects of the indigent defense system in Allen, Hardin, and Putnam counties over the biennium. This pilot program will provide a critical test case of direct state administration of the indigent defense system.

NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1

The budget continues the state rollout of the NG 9-1-1 system by increasing the monthly user fee from $0.40 to $0.60 and by repealing a provision of existing law that would have reverted the fee to $0.25 per month on October 1, 2025. The budget also revised the revenue distribution formula for the user fee revenue to provide counties with 81.33% of the revenue, an increase from the 72% share of the previous biennium. The increased fee and the increased county share will help ease the local burden to comply with coming online to the NG 9-1-1 system by 2030.

CHILD CARE

The budget did not change the initial eligibility for publicly funded child care; it remains at 145% of the federal poverty level (FPL). However, the bill funds the Child Care Choice Voucher Program through $100 million in each fiscal year, which provides publicly funded child care to families up to 200% of FPL. The budget also includes a program that will allow the cost of child care to be split by the employer, the employee, and DCY (at shares of 40%, 40%, and 20%, respectively), and a program to increase the number of licensed child care providers in the state.

COUNTY JAILS

The budget requires the $75 million appropriated in the prior operating budget for county jail construction and renovation projects to be distributed through a Department of Rehabilitation and Correction administrative process instead of a statutory funding formula. This will allow better targeting of funds and more flexible local match amounts. The budget also requires the Department of Medicaid to submit a federal 1115 Waiver to allow Medicaid cover of behavioral health, mental health, and substance abuse treatments for inmates incarcerated in the county jail and for Medicaid coverage of a 30-day supply of prescription medication upon the inmate's release.

Property tax relief policy was a large point of discussion throughout the budget negotiations and took center stage as the conference committee met and issued its report. Concerns that the bill would include provisions eliminating inside millage did not come to pass. Most of policies included in the bill addressed school district property taxation, but all of these were vetoed by Governor DeWine.

The House voted to override the governor's veto on the elimination of replacement property tax levies; school district fixed-sum and substitute emergency levies; and a school district's authority to levy a combined income tax and fixed-sum property tax. The overridden measure also changes all references to "county auditor's appraised value" in the Revised Code to "county auditor's market value." The Senate has yet to consider the override. If the Senate does vote to override, the provisions would become effective 90 days after the override vote.

Property tax provisions that were not vetoed include establishing a county commissioner (as selected by the board of county commissioners) as the county prosecutor's designated alternate on the county budget commission (CBC) if the prosecutor recuses themselves; the creation of a statewide screening system to ensure proper compliance with eligibility requirements for property tax credits; allowing commissioners to permissively create local homestead exemptions and owner-occupancy exemptions; and requiring CBCs to hold at least one public meeting each year that explains inside millage and how it functions. The local permissive property tax credits are not reimbursed by the state.

HB 96 also took a first step towards a key CCAO position: rolling back sales tax exemptions. The budget eliminated the sales tax on several items which, cumulatively, may increase state revenue by $261 million over the biennium (an estimated $65.3 million revenue increase for counties). Since sales tax is the main revenue stream for county general funds, the Association is glad that the state is examining the necessity of these exemptions.

The Local Government Fund share of state GRF tax revenue was increased for the second consecutive budget, going from 1.70% of GRF tax revenue to 1.75%. The net increase to LGF distribution remains to be seen due to other tax policy changes in the bill, namely the flattening of the income tax. Regardless, the state increasing the LGF share is a positive step.

County elected officials will receive a pay raise under the bill. Beginning in 2026, county elected official pay will be increased annually by 5% through 2029. Due to constitutional prohibitions on in-term pay raises, elected officials other than judges will not be able to receive the increase until their next term begins. Judges and county board of elections members, who are not elected officials, will receive the increased pay beginning on January 1, 2026.

Economic development continues as one of the main state's central foci. The budget continued two grant programs that make Ohio communities more competitive, with $100 million in each year being dedicated to brownfield site remediation, and $21.5 million in each year dedicated to building demolition and site revitalization. These programs have been tremendously successful in the prior two budgets

The state also created two new programs that will help increase housing availability, itself a vital component of economic development, across the state. The Residential Economic Development District Grant will provide funding for public infrastructure improvements to local governments that adopt pro-housing policies related to large-scale workforce housing. The Residential Development Revolving Loan Program will provide funding through loans to support residential development projects in rural areas.

CCAO is grateful to the many partners within the DeWine-Tressel Administration and the General Assembly who made many of these victories possible. Governor DeWine and his administration have been strong advocates for Ohio's children, incorporating many of the Association's child-centric requests into their initial proposal. Speaker of the House Matt Huffman, House Majority Leader Marilyn John, and House Finance Chairman Brian Stewart each helped move forward provisions that strengthened counties. Senate Finance Chairman Jerry Cirino helped maintain several key funding priorities for counties. Furthermore, Senator Brian Chavez was critical in protecting the 9-1-1 user fee increase in the Senate and Representative Kevin Ritter was a champion for 9-1-1 funding in the House. Additionally, Senator Nathan Manning played a key role in our indigent defense and jail funding formula efforts.

CCAO sincerely thanks Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Tressel, House and Senate leadership, and the membership of the Ohio General Assembly for their support of county government.

The CCAO policy team is grateful for all the work county commissioners, executives, and council members put in to make this budget a success for counties across the state. The countless phone calls, conversations, letters, committee testimony and more made a real difference with lawmakers. These successes would simply not be possible without your efforts. We finished the budget together, and as a result, we continue to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

POLICY UPDATE Property Tax Reform

by Dan Baker, Policy Team Member

With the specter of a November 2026 ballot initiative that would eliminate the levying of property taxes, much of the focus of the state operating budget, House Bill 96, was property tax reform.

On Wednesday, June 25 the House (59 – 38) and Senate (23 – 10) both voted to approve the report of the Committee of Conference for H.B. 96. The final version contained several provisions related to property taxes that are discussed below. It is important to note that HB 96 **did not contain the elimination of inside millage.** Property tax items contained in HB 96 include:

- Elimination of new replacement levies after January 1, 2026.*
- Eliminates the ability of a school district to levy a fixed-sum or substitute emergency levy, as well as a combined income and fixed sum property tax levy or from requesting a new levy if the district carry-over balance is above 100%, excluding renewals.*
- Adds emergency, substitute, incremental growth, and conversion levies, as well as the property tax portion of a combined income and property tax levies to a school district's 20-mill floor calculation.*
- Requires a county budget commission (CBCs) to reduce school district property tax levies if the district has a carry-over balance of more the 40%, excluding permanent improvement expenses toward the threshold, and makes certain concessions for districts with a less than $10 million balance.*
- Permits a board of county commissioners to create a county homestead property tax exemption and an owner-occupied exemption that mirror the current state programs.
- Retains the prosecutor on the CBC, but makes a county commissioner the replacement if the prosecutor recuses themselves.
- Allows a CBC to reduce millage on any voter-approved tax levy, other than debt, if it is necessary or prudent to avoid excessive collections. A CBC may not lower below previous years collections, or to cause a school district to fall below the 20-mill floor.*
- Includes CBC related provisions from HB 335.

On June 30, Governor DeWine signed HB 96, but he included a modern record of 67 vetoes, including most of the property tax provisions listed above (marked with an asterisk). The House voted 61-28 to override the governor's veto on the elimination of replacement property tax levies; school district fixed-sum and substitute emergency levies; and a school district's authority to levy a combined income tax and fixed-sum property tax. The overridden measure also changes all references to "county auditor's appraised value" in the Revised Code to "county auditor's market value." The Senate has yet to consider the override. If the Senate does vote to override, the provisions would become effective 90 days after the override vote.

Veto overrides require a three-fifths vote in each chamber (60 votes in the House and 20 in the Senate). The veto override must start with the chamber in which the bill originated; in this case, the House. A veto override can happen anytime within the General Assembly that the bill was passed. Additional veto overrides may be considered in the coming months and legally can occur anytime before December 31, 2026.

Inside Millage Rollbacks

A board of county commissioners may voluntarily reduce the county's guaranteed inside millage pursuant to R.C. 5705.313. This can be implemented in two ways:

- When a county is increasing its permissive sales and use tax it may adopt an accompanying resolution reducing inside millage.
- After a sales or use tax has been enacted and is in effect the commissioners may adopt a resolution reducing inside millage.

Since all counties currently levy a permissive sales tax, the authority effectively exists for all counties. Commissioners may now, however, reduce any number of inside mills at any time as long as the reduction does not exceed the total estimated revenue from the sales and use tax.

The commissioners must adopt a resolution to reduce inside millage, with a copy certified to the county auditor, which includes the following:

- The current inside millage rate.
- The number of guaranteed inside mills, if any, that are currently not being levied as a result of previous rollbacks.
- The number of inside mills that will be reduced.
- The resolution may either specify the number of years the reduction will be in effect or may simply state that the reduction will occur until the commissioners' levy or re-impose all or part of the reduction in the future (R.C. 5705.313(C)).
- The tax year when the reduction will first apply.

Some of the counties that have recently rolled back inside millage include Butler, Delaware, Erie and Geauga.

FEATURE Workforce Spotlight: Incumbent Worker Training Services

by Rachel Reedy, Outreach & Member Engagement Manager, CCAO and Angela Carnahan, OhioMeansJobs – Licking County



Dr. John Berry, President of Central Ohio Technical College welcomes 450+ students to the 2025 Licking County Career Xpress

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING SERVICES

Serving employers is a core part of the mission of the OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Centers across the state. Brandy Booth, Administrator of OhioMeansJobs – Knox County, described the many services her OMJ provides to local employers. Often these employers have been in the community for some time and need some additional assistance with marketing, recruiting and training.

Take the Central Ohio Joint Fire District, which serves the Village of Centerburg. A few years ago, the chief reached out to Booth and her team for help recruiting workers. As counties know, recruiting public safety personnel can be challenging. When the OMJ staff receives employer calls, they have a conversation with the employer about the job benefits, recruitment practices, retention strategies, and other details to help diagnose the barriers in hiring. Then the OMJ formulates a plan for supporting the employer in reaching its goals.

In the fire district's case, the OMJ learned there were current EMTs on staff who management felt could grow into the roles the district needed, but the funding for training wasn't available. The Knox County OMJ was able to cover 90% of the costs of training courses for three individuals. Today, those staff members are still employed in higher paramedic and firefighter positions, and the district is fully staffed.

"Training those three individuals leading to retention and a fully staffed district helps the whole community," Booth shared.

Incumbent worker training is a core service the Knox County OMJ provides employers. Booth shared another story about a local manufacturing company that was able to secure new equipment for a new service line but could not hire enough staff to fully operate the line.

The manufacturer connected with the OMJ and shared the situation. The OMJ funded incumbent worker training costs for individuals already employed to learn the new equipment and practices. Today, the manufacturer operates an entirely new service line, greatly helping their business.

CAREER XPRESS 2025: EMPOWERING LICKING COUNTY'S FUTURE WORKFORCE

OhioMeansJobs - Licking County, in partnership with the Licking Regional Educational Service Center Business Community Advisory Council (BCAC), local businesses and workforce partners, proudly hosted the Career Xpress career conference on March 11 and 12, 2025. This dynamic two-day event offered over 450 students from eight local high schools the opportunity to explore a wide range of careers, engage in employer led mock interviews, and attend an on-site career fair with 22 employers—all at no cost to schools or students.

Held on the campus of The Ohio State University at Newark and Central Ohio Technical College, Career Xpress featured 29 different career-focused presentations provided by business and industry professionals. Topics ranged from engineering, technology, skilled trades and healthcare to financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and networking. Industry leaders shared insights into career paths, essential skills, and educational options.

The event kicked off with an opening ceremony featuring keynote speaker Denise Cowburn from Tooling U-SMEwho spoke of using personal strengths to guide career choices, followed by welcoming remarks from Dr. Michael Smith (Dean-Director of OSU-N) and Dr. John Berry (President of COTC). High school students from Newark, Heath, Granville, Licking Heights, Licking Valley, C-TEC, Watkins Memorial, and Johnstown had the chance to explore the campus between sessions, giving them a preview of life beyond high school.

Career Xpress 2025 by the Numbers:

- 450+ students
- 22 employers at the career fair
- 37 business and industry presenters
- 47 employer led mock interviews conducted
- 8 Licking County school districts participated

Feedback from participants and business leaders was overwhelmingly positive. Presenters noted that students were engaged, inquisitive, and eager to learn about the many opportunities awaiting them after graduation.

The success of Career Xpress would not have been possible without the support of sponsors, including The Ohio State University - Newark, Central Ohio Technical College, Licking Regional ESC - BCAC, Licking County Chamber of Commerce, Clear Sky Rehabilitation, Magnetic Springs, MPW Industrial Services, Licking County Foundation, and Licking County Job and Family Services. Events like Career Xpress demonstrate the power of community, schools and business working together to shape the future of our workforce.



Students from Cristo Rey High School at the launch of the Ohio's Homecoming & Picnic program at the Statehouse.

FEATURE Ohio Leads Boldly into America's 250th Anniversary with County Partners at the Center

by Abby Reynolds, Executive Assistant, America 250 - Ohio

In 2026, the United States will mark its Semiquincentennial—a celebration 250 years in the making. While the word itself may be a mouthful, the spirit behind it is simple: honor the past, engage the present, and inspire the future. In Ohio, that vision is coming to life in a big way.

Under the leadership of Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly, the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial, known as America 250-Ohio, was launched in 2022 with the mission of planning a commemoration that is as inclusive, bold, and locally grounded as the state itself. With representation from all 88 counties, and partnerships across public and private sectors, America 250-Ohio is ensuring that Ohio's story is told in full—past, present, and future.

And that story begins where all good Ohio stories do: in our counties and communities.

EVERY COUNTY COUNTS

From the outset, America 250-Ohio has emphasized statewide engagement, and that includes a formal invitation for counties, cities, townships, and villages to become designated America 250-Ohio Communities. The response has been extraordinary. All 88 counties are now officially part of the program, along with more than 200 additional municipalities and jurisdictions!

This designation comes with benefits: local leaders receive access to toolkits, training, networking, and shared visibility, helping them co-create meaningful


Medina County Commissioner Steve Hambley with his fellow America 250-Ohio commissioners Samantha Turner and Nancy Putnam Hollister.

local commemorations. Each county is encouraged to designate a small team, including representatives from local government, civic organizations, or nonprofits, to work alongside the commission and lead their county's planning efforts. For more information about the Communities program or to access America 250-Ohio branding tools, please reach out to America 250-Ohio staff at am250ohcommunities@ohiohistory.org.

PLANTING A LIVING LEGACY

One of the most symbolic initiatives of America 250-Ohio is the Heritage Trees program. In partnership with county leaders, the commission is planting a white oak tree in each of Ohio's 88 counties. White oaks—resilient, native, and long-lived—are a perfect metaphor for Ohio's enduring role in the American story.



America 250-Ohio executive director Todd Kleismit visits Huron County.

Each tree is planted at a meaningful site selected by local partners and is accompanied by programming and historical interpretation. Eight counties have already planted their trees, with more scheduled for fall 2025 and the remainder slated for 2026. Counties still finalizing plans can connect directly with the commission at heritagetrees@ohiohistory.org.

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CITIZENS

America 250-Ohio isn't just looking back—it's also looking forward, with a major emphasis on civic education and youth engagement. Two programs are especially noteworthy.

First, the 4th Grade History Pass provides Ohio 4th graders and their families free admission to a network of nearly 70 participating historical sites and museums across 35 counties. Running from now until August 31, 2027, this initiative removes financial barriers to hands-on learning and ensures that more children can explore Ohio's rich and diverse history.

"These aren't just 'dots on a map,'" explains Doug Preisse, America 250-Ohio Co-Chair. "They're experiences built around real people and the real stories that shaped our country."

Second, the Next Gen Citizens initiative will support civic learning and community service through classroom-based programming aligned with the nationally recognized iCivics curriculum. Developed in partnership with ServeOhio, the service-learning component of the program will empower students to design and implement community service projects that reinforce civic values and local engagement. Over 100 organizations with participating students are expected to be part of the program's launch in fall 2025.

COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE

Ohio's celebration won't be confined to classrooms or government buildings. It will spill into parks, theaters, city centers, and railroad tracks. In fact, one of the most exciting event series is already rolling out: Ohio Goes to the Movies.

Kicking off in February 2026 and spanning 250 days, this statewide film festival will highlight Ohio's cinematic legacy through screenings of classic blockbusters, documentaries, and rare archival footage all tied to the Buckeye State. With more than 250 venues already committed, and screenings scheduled in all 88 counties, the project promises to be both celebratory and community-driven.

Also rolling through the state—literally—is the 250 Buckeye Train. Inspired by the Freedom Train of the 1976 Bicentennial, this commemorative train experience will transport Ohioans to the Transportation Celebration in Dennison, Ohio, on April 25–26, 2026. Riders will enjoy onboard entertainment, storytelling, and a layover at the historic Dennison Railroad Depot Museum, complete with vintage aircraft flyovers, WWII reenactors, and a 250-vehicle auto show.

And what would a birthday party be without a picnic? Throughout July 2026, communities across the state are invited to host Ohio's Homecoming & Picnic events.

continued on next page

These local community gatherings—whether hosted by a historical society, city, nonprofit, or a county fair board—offer an opportunity to come together in celebration and fellowship. Local gatherings will be provided with America 250-Ohio picnic kits, made possible by presenting sponsor Cenovus Energy, complete with activities, décor and resources to help facilitate these special celebrations. Communities can sign up to host a Homecoming & Picnic celebration here.

HONORING SERVICE AND PRESERVING MEMORY

No commemoration of America's 250th birthday would be complete without recognizing those who have served. A unique partnership with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office, Terracon Consultants, Inc., and heritage organizations such as the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution is driving forward the Revolutionary War Graves Identification Project. This effort aims to document and map the final resting places of more than 7,000 Revolutionary War patriots buried in Ohio—an act of remembrance that underscores the state's deep historical roots.

Local volunteers and researchers are encouraged to get involved via the Grave Marker & Cemetery Collection Portal, where contributions are acknowledged and celebrated.

STATEWIDE TRAILS & TALES

To further engage residents and visitors alike, America 250-Ohio is developing six statewide Trails & Tales tourism routes. Themed around Ohio's contributions to aviation, innovation, waterways, creativity, leadership, and transportation, the trails link historical and cultural sites across the state with storytelling as the connective tissue. "These aren't just 'dots on a map,'" explains Doug Preisse, America 250-Ohio Co-Chair. "They're experiences built around real people and the real stories that shaped our country."

Each trail is supported by a road trip playlist, digital guides, educational resources, and a mobile app that allows travelers to hear short oral histories as they approach sites. It's history but make it personal and portable. Ohio's Air & Space Trail and Ohio's Creativity Trail are already available for travelers, with Ohio's Lake Erie to Ohio River Trail launching on August 8, 2025. The innovation, transportation and leadership trails will launch later 2025 and 2026.

MURALS ACROSS OHIO

Visual storytelling is another hallmark of the America 250-Ohio effort. Through Murals Across Ohio, the commission



WACO Air Museum executive director Nancy Royer at the launch of the Ohio Air & Space Trail.

is collecting and spotlighting public art that reflects the history, culture, and future vision of Ohio communities. Cities and towns are invited to submit their murals for recognition and inclusion in statewide promotional materials and can access the submission form here.

A CALL TO COUNTY LEADERS

As we approach 2026, county leaders have a vital role to play in shaping how this anniversary is remembered and how it catalyzes civic pride, tourism, and education for years to come.

Whether it's planting a tree, screening a film, hosting a picnic, or helping students lead a service project, there is room at the table for every Ohioan in this celebration.

To learn more about how your county can participate, visit america250-ohio.org or reach out to the commission at am250ohcommunities@ohiohistory.org. Together, we can make this anniversary a defining chapter in Ohio's story and a powerful launchpad for the next 250 years.

GUEST COLUMN Ohio's Operating Budget Continues State's Strong Economic Development Focus



Dave Robinson
Principal, Montrose Group, LLC

The Montrose Group, LLC

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly continue to promote the state's economic development, often implemented by one of Ohio's 88 counties, with the passage of the state operating budget House Bill 96.

Ohio counties often use the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) property tax abatement to incentivize residential, commercial and industrial development. The Ohio General Assembly in the state operating budget expanded the use of the CRA to encourage large scale economic development allowing a county, municipality, or home rule township to amend an existing CRA tax abatement to extend the term of the tax exemption to 30 years for an existing building for a megaproject. The budget allows a building to qualify for a CRA tax exemption as part of a megaproject so long as it is owned or occupied, by a megaproject operator or supplier, and establishes that a political subdivision that does not own the property subject to a CRA exemption, with an obligation to pay property taxes on that building, is not a required party to an agreement required for commercial CRA property tax exemptions.

The Ohio General Assembly also created in HB 96 the $25 million Residential Economic Development Districts (REDDs) program to support housing development tied to 20-mile development zones around major economic development projects creating $700M in capital investment and at least 700 permanent jobs.

REDDs will be a grant program for counties, townships, and municipal corporations. This program allows these applicants to collaborate with a housing developer, a port authority, a council of government, a regional planning commission, or one or more other counties, townships, or municipal corporations. It requires grant funds to be used for providing capital for housing development through grants or loans; acquiring and readying sites for development; providing financial assistance for housing-related infrastructure projects; and addressing additional service or public safety needs. The program requires the grant applicant to have imminent plans to adopt and implement "pro-housing policies" tied to density, inspection, planning and fees and to approve a "major workforce housing project" that includes at least 100 units with program rules to be produced by the end of 2025.

The $100 million new Residential Development Program (RLF) was created to make low-interest loans for up to 50% of the required or $30,000 per house infrastructure improvements (water, sewer, road, electric, gas extensions) serving new single-family housing (non-low income housing tax credit) development in rural areas with a county population of less than 75,000 and that issued fewer new construction permits for single-family homes than the average number. The funds must be used for projects involving the development, repair, or upgrade of water, sewer, road, electric, or gas infrastructure necessary to service dwellings meeting certain statutory requirements. The political subdivisions receiving these loans must waive certain building, zoning, and planning requirements for RLF housing developments. The RLF program requires a borrowing subdivision to exempt improvements constructed from loan proceeds from property tax, requires such properties make payments in lieu of taxes to the subdivision equal to the forgone tax, requires the subdivision to use those payments to pay off the loan, and exempts homes constructed from the program to pay prevailing wage.

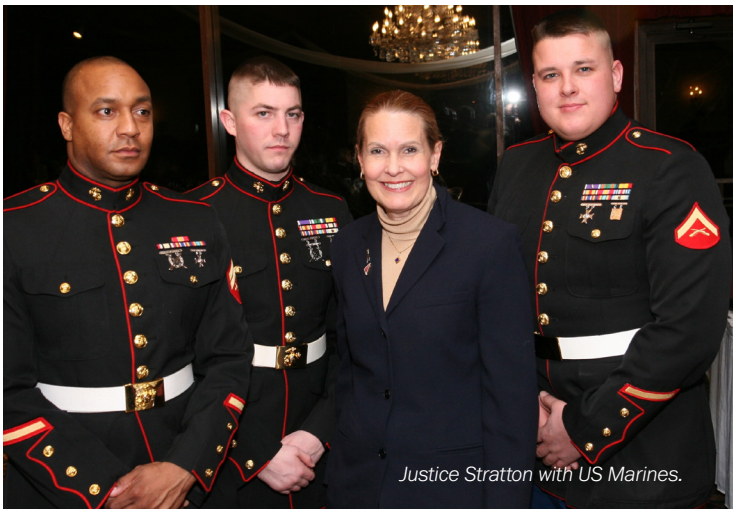
Ohio's counties have more opportunities to promote economic development based upon the policies and funding provided by Ohio's operating budget.

The Montrose Group provides economic development planning, advisory, lobbying and project financing services, and contact Dave Robinson at drobinson@montrosegroupllc.com if you need assistance with any economic development, project finance or lobbying services.



Justice Stratton speaking with law enforcement.


Justice Stratton with law enforcement.


Justice Stratton with US Marines.

FEATURE Stepping Up Ohio: A Decade of Transforming Mental Health and Criminal Justice

by Eve Stratton, Project Director, Stepping Up Ohio

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Stepping Up in 2025, I'm excited to share the story of Stepping Up Ohio—a model that's reshaped how our state addresses mental health within the criminal justice system. For those looking to tackle similar challenges, here's how we did it and what we've learned.

THE BEGINNING

In 2015, Franklin County, Ohio was chosen as a Stepping Up pilot site. As a Supreme Court Justice with years of focus on mental health and criminal justice, I helped with the Franklin County project. I had retired early, in 2012, from the Ohio Supreme Court so I could dedicate myself fully to these issues. As part of my mission, I become the Stepping Up Ohio Project Director. Peg's Foundation, inspired by the Morgan family's personal experience with mental health, became our key funder, enabling us to scale our vision.

When I was a Justice promoting mental health courts and crisis intervention teams, I visited about 10 counties, attending a lunch that NAMI would pay for, to try to introduce the concept to the counties. I also created a "Kitchen Kabinet" which, with two different governors' blessings, would meet quarterly with up to nine of the state cabinet members to talk about criminal justice and mental health. With Peg's Foundation's support, we built on these efforts to create Stepping Up Ohio.

THE OHIO MODEL

Our approach was hands-on: Thom Craig, Peg's Foundation Director of Mental Health Programs, and I visited multiple counties in person (later via Zoom), to talk about how we could reverse the cycle of criminal justice being the de facto mental health hospital. Thom Craig and I became a team of two to visit each county. Using the Kitchen Kabinet model, starting with ten members, we formed a Steering Committee to address issues on a statewide basis.

We also leveraged the Attorney General Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness, which then-Attorney General Mike DeWine (now Governor) and I founded and co-chaired starting in 2011. 9 years later, current Attorney General Dave Yost asked me to continue in that role. It has grown to 15 committees and 500 members as an action arm for Stepping Up issues and other needs.

PROGRESS BY 2025

By 2025, our Steering Committee has grown from those 10 to 56 members and includes state agencies, non-profits, and many other associations. This group meets twice yearly to share solutions and drive statewide change.

Today, 62 of Ohio's 88 counties have joined as Stepping Up partners, through the commissioners signing the Stepping Up Resolution. Thom Craig and I have visited almost all in person, then later by Zoom, and have conducted over 35 or more follow-up visits. We now have a team of nine presenters, mostly statewide partners, and each three and a half hour zoom meeting also has local presenters. This blending of state and local presentations provides additional resources and fosters collaboration. The county learns about programs and resources in their own county they did not know about prior to the meeting.

SURVEY RESULTS

We conducted surveys in 2020 and 2024, focused on systems change due to Ohio's limited data infrastructure. The surveys reveal great progress:

- **Policy Wins:** All 88 counties now suspend, not terminate, Medicaid, preserving access to care.
- **Jail Improvements:** Every county jail can now be reimbursed for psychiatric drugs, long-term injectables, and MAT, with most jails now using mental health, substance abuse, veteran, and suicide screening tools.
- **Specialized Dockets:** Ohio has greatly increased its use of specialized dockets, including drug, mental health, and veterans courts, to more intensely focus on diversion and recovery.
- **Veterans Support:** 41 counties use the Veterans Reentry Search System (VRSS), identifying 30-40% more veterans, connecting them to the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist and VA services. Ohio now aims to mandate this tool by law.
- **Sequential Intercept Mapping:** Multiple counties have now used the SIM services offered to them for free to dive deep into the relationship between the criminal justice and mental health systems, identifying what resources exist, what the needs are, and ranking them for future action.
- **Crisis Response:** Counties have increased their response to crisis needs by using mobile crisis teams, working on 9-8-8/9-1-1 interoperability, and creating drop-off centers, many through Peg's Foundation Clear Pathways project.
- **Collaboration:** There have been major increases in collaboration between jails, the mental health boards, and the courts. 30 counties now have re-entry programs, and referrals for housing and treatment have improved. Many counties now have Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) programs to assist with competency referrals from criminal court to the probate court for treatment, not just restoration.

IMPACT AND LESSONS

Stepping Up has been an agent of change in Ohio by fostering county-level relationships, raising awareness of resources, and driving policy changes that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Counties report learning about state programs, improving practices, and building partnerships that enhance care for those with mental illness in the justice system.

KEY LESSONS FOR OTHERS

- **Engage Locally:** In-person visits and local presentations build trust and uncover solutions.
- **Align Stakeholders:** Statewide committees ensure broad buy-in and action.
- **Focus on Systems:** Small policy shifts, like Medicaid suspension, yield big results.
- **Secure Funding:** Foundation support (like Peg's Foundation) fuels outreach and sustainability.
- **Learn Together:** Peer sharing sparks innovation across counties.

REMAINING CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

- Supportive housing
- Care coordination and transitional supports
- Treatment access
- Transportation

These gaps point to future priorities, like telehealth expansion or housing partnerships, to keep momentum going.

DIVE DEEPER

There are many other changes and hard data in the survey report that you could examine in greater detail for ideas. The two surveys were conducted each time though a free program offered by the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services through Bowling Green University and the expert assistance or Dr. Melissa Burek, Dr. Philip Stinson, Dr. MacKenzie Grace, and Stephanie DeCroix.

The full report is available here.

Please visit Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Stepping Up webpage for further information about the initiative.

Also see the link to the Stepping Up page on my personal website EstrattonConsulting.org.

A DECADE OF DIFFERENCE

Stepping Up Ohio proves what's possible when passion, partnerships, and persistence align. From one county to 62, we've built a foundation for lasting change. Here's to the next decade of breaking the cycle and building hope.

FEATURE One Big Beautiful Bill Act Signed into Law: What it Means for Counties

by Eryn Hurley, Managing Director, Government Affairs, National Association of Counties and Rachel Reedy, Outreach & Member Engagement Manager, CCAO

On July 4, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act into law following lengthy debate in Congress over its provisions. The sweeping legislative package will have major impacts on America's county governments, as detailed below. Overall, the bill represents a mixed outcome, with significant cost shifts to states and certain counties, mainly in Medicaid and SNAP administration and benefits matching. A full analysis of the Act can be found here.

POSITIVE PROVISIONS FOR COUNTIES

Municipal Bonds Preserved

- Leaves municipal bonds untouched, preserving the tax exemption for all bonds and protecting counties' ability to finance critical infrastructure at lower

Creation of Rural Hospital Grant

- Creates a new Rural Health Transformation Program funded with $50 billion from FY 2028 to FY 2032 to support state efforts to strengthen rural hospitals and health providers. States must submit a detailed transformation plan by December 31, 2025 outlining strategies to expand rural access, improve outcomes, leverage technology, boost clinician recruitment and stabilize hospital finances. Funds must not be used for state Medicaid cost-sharing and may be withheld or reclaimed if misused.Unused funds can be redistributed annually through 2034.

Conservation Funding

- Integrates $13 billion in unobligated Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to provide mandatory funding for U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs, empowering counties and local partners to invest in soil, water and land stewardship.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

- Permanently increases the volume of tax credits available for low-income housing by 12.5% and lowers the private activity bond financing required to access the credit to 25% through calendar year 2029.

New Markets Tax Credit

- Permanently extends the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) that promotes community development and economic growth by attracting private investment in low-income communities with high unemployment and poverty.

KEY COUNTY CONCERNS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- **Benefit Cost Shift:** For the first time in history, requires states to contribute a portion of SNAP benefit costs based on the state's error rate beginning on FFY 2028. States with error rates below 6% are exempt from contributing to benefits. States with higher error rates will gradually assume a cost share of up to 15%. States may use either their FFY 2025 or FFY 2026 payment error rate to determine their required match for FFY 2028. For FFY 2029 and beyond, the match is based on the payment error rate from three fiscal years prior. Ohio's FFY 2024 error rate is 9.01%. If effective today, Ohio would be required to pay $320 million (10%) of the benefit costs per year. Currently, the state pays $0.
- **Administrative Cost Shift:** Increases the state and county administrative cost share from 50% to 75% beginning in FFY 2027 (October 1, 2026). In Ohio, this will cost the state $65 million annually if no other administrative factors change. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services estimates counties could be responsible for an additional $40 million annually.
- **Work Requirements:** Expands work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), raising the age range from 18–54 to 18–64. Additionally, the bill expands work requirements for those with dependents over age 14.

Medicaid Provisions

- **Work Requirements:** Imposes work requirements on Medicaid recipients aged 19 to 64 who are not pregnant, not enrolled in Medicare and not otherwise exempt starting no later than the first quarter of 2027. Medicaid applicants and recipients must demonstrate community engagement—such as working, volunteering or attending school for 80 hours per month—to maintain eligibility. States must verify compliance at each eligibility redetermination and may conduct additional verifications more frequently. Exemptions apply for certain groups including minors, caretakers of children 13 years or younger, recently incarcerated individuals, those with medical hardships or residents of disaster-affected areas. The Medicaid community engagement requirement cannot be waived under Section 1115.

- Ohio submitted a work requirement waiver in February 2025 and was already embarking on this path.

- **Medicaid Cost Sharing** Imposes new out-of-pocket costs on low-income Medicaid enrollees starting October 1, 2028. Cost sharing would not be more than $35 per service, and includes exemptions on services like primary care, mental health, substance use disorder services or services at federally qualified health centers and similar clinics.

Sequestration

- NACo is still awaiting final estimates on the cost of the Senate reconciliation bill, however the legislation will likely trigger spending cuts through sequestration of some mandatory funding, putting the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds at risk of elimination without additional action from Congress.

OTHER COUNTY IMPACTS

SALT Deduction

- Raises the state and local tax (SALT) deduction cap to $40,000 for 2025 for individuals and joint filers making less than $500,000 per year in modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) and $40,400 in 2026 for individuals and joint filers making less than $505,000 in MAGI. For 2027-2029, both the cap and the income threshold would be 101% of the previous year's amount. For 2025-2029, the cap would be reduced by 30% of the excess of income threshold, if any, with a minimum cap of $10,000. In 2030, the cap would return to $10,000 with no income threshold or phase-out, meaning that lawmakers will need to again address the SALT cap.

Medicaid Provisions

- **New Verification and Redetermination Requirements:** Adds several new administrative requirements that would increase the burden on counties, particularly in states where counties are responsible for Medicaid eligibility operations. These include monthly address checks beginning in 2029, quarterly death checks for enrollees starting in 2028, monthly provider eligibility and death screenings starting in 2028 and twice-yearly eligibility redeterminations beginning in 2026. Individuals with disabilities may be exempted from this requirement.
- **Provider Tax Restrictions:** Prohibits non-expansion states from assessing new provider taxes on a class of services if they do not already have place at the time of the bill's enactment. In Medicaid expansion states, it gradually reduces the hold harmless threshold for all provider types—except nursing and intermediate care facilities—by 0.5% each year until 2032, when the threshold reaches 3.5%.

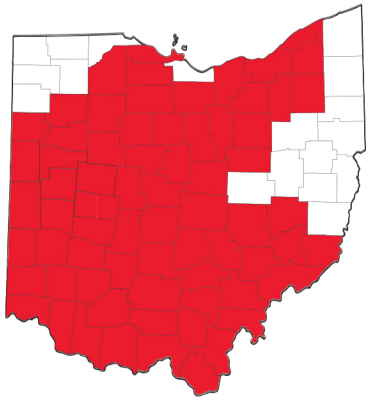
Opportunity Zones

- Establishes a new round and permanently extends the Opportunity Zones tax incentive program that provides tax incentives for investments in designated distressed neighborhoods, or qualified opportunity zones, with key reforms.

Air Traffic Control

- Invests in upgrades to air traffic control systems at airports across the country, which would likely include some county-owned airports.

NACo and CCAO will continue to keep counties informed as the Act is implemented.

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Participants in a recent grant writing workshop that Ohio State University Extension facilitated.

FEATURE Growing Ohio's Economic Opportunities through Extension Outreach

by David Civittolo, Interim Associate Dean and Director, Ohio State University Extension and Interim Chair, Department of Extension

Throughout the state, Ohio State University Extension professionals work closely with community partners—such as elected officials, local governments, port authorities, and others—to provide resources and support that strengthen economic development at the local, regional, and state levels. Here is a look at how Extension's economic development efforts are making a difference in Ohio communities.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Vibrant local economies depend on the health of local businesses. Extension's Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program unites community partners to support small business development and growth. Extension professionals collaborate with local, regional, and state governments, schools, nonprofits, and corporations to identify needs and create opportunities for businesses in specific areas.

Two recent BRE initiatives created tangible results for small business owners in Ohio. The first project focused on helping businesses in Ottawa County recover from the impacts of the global pandemic. This effort supported business growth and workforce retention by identifying challenges, building strong partnerships, and improving the overall business climate. It also worked to increase competitiveness, promote the local economy, and attract new investment. The second project supported a private company's $1.3 million expansion in Noble County. This success was made possible through collaboration with JobsOhio, Ohio Southeast Economic Development, and Extension in Noble County. These efforts had measurable positive outcomes.

In Ottawa County, Extension's BRE work benefited 100 businesses—with more than 2,000 total employees—to help them sustain operations and plan for the future. In southern Ohio, the expansion created 13 new jobs and brought new life to a long-vacant building in Noble County. Through these projects, Extension's BRE approach strengthens Ohio's economy by helping communities adapt to change and take action on emerging opportunities.

BROADBANDOHIO

Access to reliable, high-speed internet is essential for Ohio's communities. Schools, healthcare facilities, businesses, and families all depend on broadband access to learn, work, and survive.

In collaboration with BroadbandOhio, Heartland Forward, and the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, Extension works to bring high-speed internet to every Ohioan. Extension professionals deliver educational programs across the state, equipping community leaders with the tools and knowledge to secure funding and expand broadband infrastructure. In 2025, these classes were held at five locations across Ohio, empowering 85 local community leaders to advocate for and take steps to plan for connectivity in their regions.

IMPLAN REPORTS AND FEEDBACK

Extension uses IMPLAN, a licensed economic modeling tool, to produce detailed economic reports for Ohio's counties and regions. These reports include information related to demographics, industries, occupations, and the environment; and they are updated annually. Regional IMPLAN reports are available to the public at go.osu.edu/IMPLAN.

Extension's IMPLAN team also partners with local governments, corporations, and community organizations to develop customized reports tailored to specific needs. Using advanced modeling software, these analyses can measure the economic impact of proposed projects or policy changes—such as shifts in employment, labor income, business output, tax revenue, and more. This information helps community leaders, economic development professionals, and business owners make informed decisions about investments and strategies that drive growth.

GRANT WRITING WORKSHOPS

Extension professionals lead grant-writing workshops designed to help community organizers, nonprofit leaders, and government staff master the grant development process. These workshops address how to identify funding opportunities, craft compelling proposals, and manage awarded grants effectively. By building local capacity, Extension ensures that more Ohio communities can secure critical funding for projects that improve quality of life and drive economic progress.



NEW HEALTH CLINIC IN APPALACHIA

Due to the absence of hospitals in Morgan, Noble, and Monroe counties, a new healthcare clinic will be built in Noble County to help address critical gaps in medical access throughout this region in Appalachia. The clinic is being funded by an $8.4 million grant from the Ohio Department of Development, secured with support from Extension. Once complete, the clinic is expected to create 12 jobs and improve healthcare access for residents in a traditionally underserved part of the state.

EXTENSION'S COMMITMENT

Extension supports economic development across Ohio by forming strong partnerships and delivering community-focused outreach. From helping small businesses grow to expanding broadband access, offering IMPLAN data, and leading grant-writing workshops, Extension empowers local leaders to strengthen their communities. These efforts build resilient economies, create jobs, and enhance quality of life for Ohioans.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Jane Campbell



FEATURE From Courthouse to Capitol Hill: Jane Campbell's Legacy of Service and Civic Education

by Steve Caraway, CCAO Managing Director of Enterprise and Retirement Services and Rachel Reedy, CCAO Outreach and Member Engagement Manager

As Jane Campbell prepares to retire from her role as President and CEO of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, her remarkable career in public service stands as a testament to the lasting influence of strong local leadership. From her early days in the Ohio House of Representatives to her time as a Cuyahoga County Commissioner, Campbell has consistently demonstrated how local governance builds the foundation for national impact. "Local government is where we learn about democracy," Campbell reflects. "It's where we see how things actually get done and that understanding shaped everything I did after."

Campbell began her public career in 1984 as one of just nine women in the 99-member Ohio House. She quickly established herself as a policy leader, navigating complex legislative priorities including pioneering legislation to fund local sports stadiums using the state's first-ever sin tax. Her work in Columbus helped her build a reputation as a practical, thoughtful legislator who understood the relationship between taxes, services, and public expectations.

After 12 years in the legislature, Campbell was elected Cuyahoga County Commissioner. That transition from policymaker to policy executor was transformative. "As a legislator, you say, 'This is what they should do.' As a commissioner, you are them. You have to make it happen," she said.

Campbell found herself responsible for both legislative and executive functions, learning how to lead a large bureaucracy, manage cross-jurisdictional funding, and oversee complex health and human service systems. "The most important lesson I learned was how to manage without micromanaging. You have to select strong leaders, trust them, and still hold them accountable," she said. "You can't just say, 'That's the administrator's fault.' You're elected to lead."

She also gained deep insight into how federal, state, and local funding intersect, particularly in areas like child welfare, job training, and public infrastructure. "The county is an instrumentality of the state," she explained. "That taught me to navigate systems, align different funding sources, and stay focused on outcomes for the public."

Those skills and insights became central to her leadership at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, where she has served as President and CEO since 2015. The Society's mission to inspire informed patriotism aligned closely with her passion for civic education and her belief in the importance of helping citizens understand how their government works.

Under Campbell's leadership, the Society expanded its educational programming, particularly for underserved youth in Washington, D.C. "We created the 'We the People' Constitution Tour for middle schoolers, many of whom live just miles from

the Capitol but had never been inside," she said. "We want them to understand this government belongs to them."

She also guided the Society in lifting up previously untold stories, such as the role of enslaved people in building the Capitol, and contributed to expanding public understanding of the artwork, artifacts, and the architectural history of Congress.

"Local government is where we learn about democracy," Campbell reflects. "It's where we see how things actually get done and that understanding shaped everything I did after."

Campbell sees her work in Washington not as a departure from local government, but as a continuation of it as she worked to preserve and tell the story of a universal symbol of democracy in the Capitol building.

As she prepares to return to Ohio, Campbell is not stepping away from public service entirely. "I'm not done with the conversation about how governments work together," she said. "I'll always be an advocate for that."

From community meetings in Cuyahoga County to historic corridors in the Capitol, Campbell's career reminds us that good governance starts locally.

SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2025

CCAO Toolbox: Education, Advocacy and Leading Through Change

August 24-26, 2025

Hocking Hills Lodge & Conference Center
Hocking County, Ohio



GUEST COLUMN Supporting Employee Caregivers



Lisa S. Weitzman

MSSA, LISW-S, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Benjamin Rose

Ella is one of your most dependable county employees. She is diligent, hardworking and reliable, and all staff rely on her when they need assistance with a project – or simply an ear to listen to them. Recently, though, you have noticed that she appears disengaged, drifting off during meetings, behind on her assignments and short with other staff members. Her supervisor has tried to talk with Ella about these concerns, but Ella simply dismisses them. What has happened to your model employee? Does she need a performance improvement plan?

Chances are, what's happening to Ella is happening with many others on your staff – and will happen to many others: Ella is your employee during the day, but she is also the primary caregiver for an older person in her life.

It turns out that Ella has been her mother's primary caregiver for several years, but as Mom's dementia has progressed, Ella's responsibilities have further increased. Ella's job at home has now begun to impinge on her job with you. She is desperate to find additional help for Mom, but since agencies are only open from 9 to 5 and each call requires multiple follow-ups, she has lost the ability to balance it all.

Ella, then, hasn't become a poor employee; she is simply an overwhelmed one who needs guidance, support and the security of knowing her job is not at risk. In essence, she needs to know that the county understands the demands of caregiving and is prepared to help her connect with the services she needs in her home, all while providing a supportive work environment when she is onsite.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EMPLOYEE CAREGIVER

Many people provide care for an older person in their lives. They may help with groceries, run errands, pay bills, schedule appointments, help with driving or fill pill boxes. Maybe they help with arranging or even providing transportation when their older loved one no longer drives. Increasingly, these caregivers are also expected to operate complex medical equipment and perform other medical tasks normally handled by trained personnel. And most of these employees do not identify as caregivers; rather, they are spouses, adult children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or even close friends simply fulfilling their family role.



Caregiver support program, WeCare

These are the faces of our caregivers, the individuals who offer essential care and companionship to older adults with disabilities or chronic health conditions. They are mostly unpaid and have no formal training to provide these services. In essence, family caregivers are the backbone of support for people who choose to age in place.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU, THE COUNTY EMPLOYER?

While many workplaces are unaware of staff who are concurrently unpaid family/friend caregivers, the numbers clearly indicate that all workplaces increasingly face this challenge. A recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) noted that, between 2011 and 2022, the number of people caring for older family members increased from 18.2 to 24.1 million.[1]

How does this number translate into your workplace? In Ohio alone, one in six adults are family caregivers providing unpaid care. Those caring for someone with dementia spend an average of 31 hours weekly doing so. 8 in 10 admit that caregiving interrupts their work life; 40% admit to the significant emotional stress of trying to do it all.

Additionally, low morale and disengagement can be contagious. The numbers impact you because, for many, balancing work and caregiving is simply not sustainable – and their outside employment is what they feel forced to relinquish. In fact, one in five employees have left a

job because their employer did not provide family care benefits. And the choice is not faced solely by the entry-level workforce; it is also the dilemma of upper management and senior leadership, whose choice to step away to address the caregiving challenges at home represents a significant loss of institutional knowledge and critical community connections, let alone the financial cost to replace them.

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF EMPLOYEE CAREGIVERS

In addition to the value each employee brings to the workplace based on knowledge, experience, and commitment to the work, employers have noted significant gains from employees who are caregivers. Their work at home translates into enhanced empathy and emotional intelligence, which makes them better collaborative team members. The perpetual juggling act has forced them to improve their time management skills, taught them perseverance, and helped them become better able to prioritize tasks, make decisions with imperfect knowledge, take calculated risks, put measures in place to avoid issues down the road, manage unanticipated disruptions, and work smarter – all of which benefit you, the employer.[2]

POLICY OPTIONS TO CHANGE THE DIALOGUE

Policy options do exist that can help counties as employers to support caregivers like Ella. The National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers (2022) outlines recommendations, including tax credits, expanded paid leave and direct caregiver payments. Employers may also adopt voluntary measures such as flexible work arrangements, telecommuting, employee assistance programs and respite care services – which have been shown to provide a return of $1.70 to $4.45 for every dollar invested.[3]

LOCAL INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT FAMILY CAREGIVERS

At the city and county levels, a concerted effort to address the needs of caregiver employees has begun. HR leaders are beginning to recognize that senior care benefits positively impact recruitment, retention and productivity. One study even showed that the availability of benefits was more strongly related to job satisfaction, commitment and intention to stay on the job than was actual policy use.[4]

The City of Cleveland and the City of Euclid, for example, have partnered with Benjamin Rose, a community-based organization wholly committed to serving older adults and the family and friends who care for and about them. Benjamin Rose has led multiple conversations for staff about issues related to caregiving, hoping to break down the stigma of talking at work about caring for older persons, and regularly attends staff-focused health fairs. Benjamin Rose has also helped to link employees to WeCare…Because You Do, the organization's telephone-based care navigation and caregiver support program, which is offered at no cost thanks to grant funding under the Older Americans Act.

The Lake County Board of Commissioners offers an annual Lake County Caregiver Forum, providing information, resources and informative presentations for individuals caring for older adults. This event is offered both for community members and county employees.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

While it may seem overwhelming to solve all the issues surrounding family caregiving, there ARE things you can do now to begin to change the culture of your workplace:

- Accommodate the need for flexible work schedules, to the extent possible.
- Find streamlined ways to connect employees with robust caregiver support programs like WeCare.
- Practice open communication with employees around caregiving and post information on caregiving resources throughout county offices.
- Build a culture where caregivers feel they can talk about their caregiving. Lead by example: as commissioners, challenge yourselves to be open about your own caregiving responsibilities.
- Offer an employee respite benefit.
- Work intentionally to prevent discrimination against caregivers in the workplace.
- Engage in continual leadership training to learn how to support caregivers and build caregiving into your own policies and procedures.
- Provide regular education to staff about caregiving-related topics of interest.
- Advocate for policy changes at all levels to best support working caregivers.

Supporting family caregivers is not only a compassionate choice; it is also a smart economic strategy for county commissioners. By investing in caregiver-friendly policies and practices, we can strengthen families, retain valuable employees and build a more resilient care infrastructure.

[1] Hunt, 2025.

[2] Kaplowitz and Mangino, Caregiver Employees Bring Unique Value to Companies, Harvard Business Review, 2023.

[3] Respect a Caregiver's Time Coalition & AARP, 2017, as cited in Reinhard et al., 2023.

[4] The Effects of Caregiving on Work and Employee Retention, Advisor Magazine, 2025.

GUEST COLUMN Tips for Navigating Volatile Investment Markets

by Empower

While volatility is often associated with negativity and downward movements in the stock market, it is technically neither good nor bad. Volatility is the quick and unpredicted price fluctuation of an investment or an entire market (i.e., bond market, stock market, etc.). Fluctuations can be both positive and negative and vary in frequency and severity.

As you've likely noticed and experienced firsthand, the stock market has undergone some pretty big fluctuations during the past few decades, and those events had a major impact on investor portfolios. At times, it was hard to imagine how stock prices would ever recover. But they did. For those who were saving and investing for retirement, the temporary drop in account balances was likely unnerving. But those who stayed the course generally saw their accounts bounce back eventually.

Weathering periods of market volatility is a normal part of the investing process. Nobody likes to see their account balance drop, especially if it seems as though the money they've worked so hard to earn has just disappeared. But there are ways to help minimize some of the anxiety related to market volatility:

- Think long term – Building your retirement nest egg is a long-term project. People can spend decades planning, saving, and investing. During that period, markets will swing up and down. Factors such as world events, business trends, and even the weather can affect market performance. Don't let short-term volatility distract you from your long-term plans.
- Don't try to time your investing – You may be tempted to shift your assets into more conservative investments following a market downturn and reinvest when markets start to bounce back. But think twice before you engage in this practice, known as "market timing". No one can predict when and how markets will recover. Missing out on just a few periods of strong market performance can lower your overall returns over time.
- Keep contributing – When markets drop and bad economic news fills the headlines, some people consider putting their retirement contributions on hold. But continuing to contribute during such periods can actually work to your advantage. A drop in stock prices can mean that your contributions buy more of your chosen investment funds at a lower price, which puts you in a better position for growth when markets recover.

While it's a good idea to regularly check your account and adjust your saving and investing strategies, logging in each day can shift your attention to short-term gains and losses rather than long-term performance and goals. Always keep in mind that building your retirement nest egg is more like a marathon than a sprint. If you have any questions, schedule some time with your local plan representative.

Go to ocerp457.com to schedule a meeting.



EMPOWER Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

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Your business is what fuels us and we're honored to have you as a partner.

Thank you for 15 years of partnership with the CCAO.

Kirkland Mizerek
Executive Vice President
Palmer Energy Company
419-539-9180

www.palmerenergy.com

Economic Development Is A Team Sport

JobsOhio helps businesses and their people thrive in our state.

As Ohio's economic development corporation, JobsOhio drives high-growth business investments and job creation with the support of strong regional partners across the state. **Ready to grow? Let's grow, together.**

JobsOhio
Ohio's Economic Development Corporation



In February, CCAO Service Corporation hosted its first "Facilities Summit." Joe Sokel from County FIRM is pictured during his presentation to county facility directors across the state.

GUEST COLUMN Who is County FIRM?



Joe Sokol
Regional Manager – Professional Services
County FIRM

COUNTY FIRM
FACILITY INVESTMENT RETROFIT MAINTENANCE

WHO IS COUNTY FIRM?

County FIRM (Facilities Investment, Retrofit, and Maintenance) is a consulting group under the CCAO Service Corporation that supports counties in managing facility-related projects with an owner-focused approach. Our team brings together professional engineers, former mechanical contractors, equipment specialists, and individuals with experience developing large-scale construction and retrofit projects. The company was formed with the goal of helping counties navigate complex facility decisions by combining deep technical knowledge with real-world construction experience.

County FIRM is uniquely positioned to represent each CCAO member county's interest and is incentivized as such. Unlike many firms involved in construction projects, County FIRM does not sell or install equipment. This independence allows them to provide counties with objective guidance, free from product or vendor bias. Our only incentive is for our county clients to get a successful project that meets all their goals.

While County FIRM does offer traditional engineering services like developing bid packages, County FIRM's role often extends beyond design. Because our staff understands both engineering and contractor perspectives, they can anticipate challenges before they arise, reduce the likelihood of unnecessary change orders, and guide project teams toward outcomes that align with the county's long-term interests.

From planning HVAC replacements to overseeing new construction like jail and justice center projects, County FIRM provides expertise to help counties obtain unbiased information about their specific construction situation so that they can make good business decisions. County FIRM is the easy button for counties to make sure they are getting a successful facilities project that limits cost over runs, sub optimal scope selections, and other costly mistakes.

CASE STUDY: MARION COUNTY

Marion County engaged with the County FIRM Team following an introductory meeting between County FIRM representatives, the county commissioners, and the county administrative clerk. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the consulting services offered by County FIRM through the CCAO Service Corporation and to discuss how those services might support any upcoming facilities projects the county was considering.

During that initial conversation, the county administrative clerk mentioned an active proposal under consideration for a major HVAC retrofit project involving the replacement of more than 100 variable air volume (VAV) boxes in the county's administrative building. The administrative clerk and commissioners asked County FIRM to review the proposal and offer their feedback. County FIRM agreed and would provide such feedback both in terms of technical validity and cost competitiveness. This is a typical service County FIRM will provide at no cost to counties.

County FIRM conducted a thorough review of the scope of work, visited the site, and evaluated the pricing against current market trends and our own experience across similar projects. While the proposed solution was generally sound, County FIRM identified a few refinements to the scope that would reduce future maintenance burdens on the county and improve the building's operational efficiency.

More notably, the pricing attached to the original proposal appeared significantly above market rates. County FIRM's analysis, based on comparable projects across the state, suggested the proposal was roughly 30% higher than what could be considered "market competitive rates". This insight prompted county leaders to reevaluate their approach.

Following further discussion with County FIRM and internal deliberations, Marion County elected to put the project out for formal bid leveraging the improved scope and specifications refined through County FIRM's review. As a result, Marion County contracted with County FIRM to prepare and administer a bid package for the VAV box replacement project. Marion County and County FIRM received competitive bids that led to the successful completion of the VAV box replacement project and an overall savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars on a project cost of roughly eight hundred thousand dollars.

HOW TO ENGAGE COUNTY FIRM

Counties can engage County FIRM at nearly any stage of a facilities or construction related process, however the earlier County FIRM can get involved, the more value counties will see from their engagement. The first step is typically a conversation. County FIRM can be contacted directly or through the CCAO to schedule an initial discussion.

That meeting, offered at no cost to the county, focuses on understanding the project context, what the county is trying to accomplish, what challenges it may be facing, and what goals and constraints are in place. County FIRM takes time to understand each situation before offering any recommendations, recognizing that each county's needs and resources are different. This will likely involve walkthroughs and/or additional conversations with personnel at no cost to the county.

This early discovery work often helps clarify the path forward, even in cases where no formal engagement follows. When services are needed, County FIRM provides a clearly defined proposal with detailed scope to achieve the county's specific goals for each respective project. These services may include bid package development, owner's representation, contractor oversight, equipment review, commissioning, or other support related to capital improvements, energy retrofits, or new construction.

County FIRM is a professional services firm, and its role is to supplement, not replace, the county's existing staff. Our focus is on helping counties make better-informed decisions, obtain unbiased information, and maintain long-term flexibility in facility operations. In an environment where construction costs and complexity are rising, County FIRM can serve as a useful resource for counties looking to take a more proactive and informed approach to facility planning and execution.



Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus

VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

Denise Driehaus, Hamilton County Commissioner and CCAO 1st Vice President

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A COUNTY COMMISSIONER?

I have been a Hamilton County Commissioner since 2017.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF? WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND? WHAT OTHER ELECTED POSITIONS HAVE YOU HELD? WHY DID YOU FIRST RUN?

I was born on the west side of Hamilton County as one of 8 kids. As an adult, I moved into the City of Cincinnati where we raised our two kids, Sarah and Andrew. I was very active in our local community serving as a coach, PTA president, member of parish council, member of the community council, and as a member of the Cincinnati Recreation Commission. I also owned and operated Philipps Swim Club and the Front Porch Coffeehouse. In 2008, I was elected as a state representative in the 31st district where I served for 8 years. I ran for elected office to further serve my community and provide a voice for the people in my district.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO BE A COMMISSIONER?

I became a county commissioner to continue serving my local community, and to address some of the pressing issues being considered at the county – including adequate funding for children services and elderly services, the disfunction between the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County in relationship to our sewer district, and to make sure the county helped spur neighborhood economic development.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN PRIORITIES AS A COUNTY COMMISSIONER?

My main priorities as a Hamilton County Commissioner have been to provide superior services to the citizens of the county through an adequately funded organization, improve public safety, catalyze economic development and strengthen partnerships with the 49 jurisdictions throughout Hamilton County. I have also focused on lifting the voices of women, girls and our minority communities and addressing our addiction crisis.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF HAVING ACHIEVED IN YOUR TIME AS COMMISSIONER?

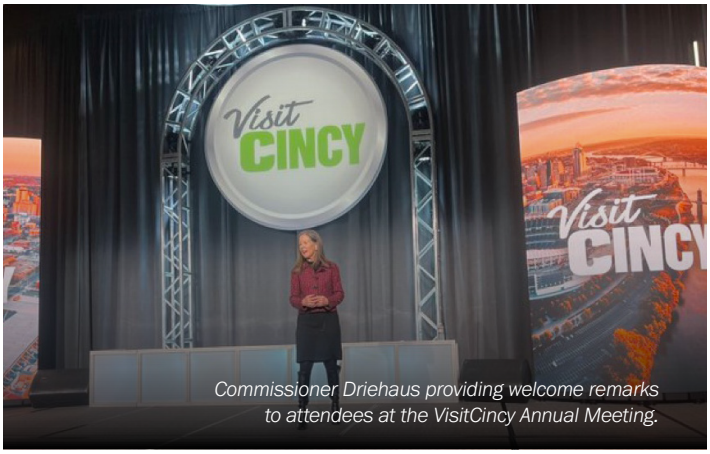
I am proud of the work we have done to stabilize the county by providing competitive wages to our employees, especially our 9-1-1 call takers, sheriff deputies and children services workers. I am also proud to have founded the Commission on Women and Girls (CWG), a volunteer group that lifts up the voice of women and girls regarding many issues including access to period products, pay equity and domestic violence. The girls are what make the CWG so special. Additionally, I am proud to chair the Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition (HCARC), which pulls together our many partners in that space to address the ongoing addiction crisis. Fortunately, we have seen a remarkable reduction in the number of local overdose deaths, but much work remains.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU'VE DEALT WITH AS A COUNTY COMMISSIONER?

One of the biggest challenges I have faced as a county commissioner is the inability to talk to my colleagues about important issues that face the county outside of our public sessions due to Sunshine Laws. It has hindered our ability to understand each other's points of view and delayed some progress.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OR ADJUSTMENT AFTER TAKING OFFICE?

When I took office, I was surprised by the expectation of some that I would not work full time as a commissioner. It was an adjustment for me and the staff!



Commissioner Driehaus providing welcome remarks to attendees at the VisitCincy Annual Meeting.

ONE OF THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COMMISSIONER IS TO DEVELOP A BALANCED BUDGET AND PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO DELIVER COUNTY SERVICES. WHAT HAS BEEN ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THAT AREA?

One of the biggest challenges related to the county budget has been the lack of revenue available to provide adequate services to our constituents. We have seen very slow growth in the sales tax and have suffered cuts from the State of Ohio. At the same time, the needs in the community have grown and providing services has become more expensive.

HOW HAS YOUR COUNTY PARTICIPATED IN THE STATE-COUNTY PARTNERSHIP?

The Hamilton County Commission has been very active in engaging with our Statehouse delegation and other members of the General Assembly. We have an annual meeting with our local delegation to catch up and easily schedule phone calls when issues arise where we need state support. I was just on the phone with legislators yesterday about their budget and our concern about the elimination of property tax revenues for basic county services via House Bill 335. I also have a good working relationship with Governor DeWine. We have lobbyists that help with our efforts, as well.

WHAT DO YOU FIND ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL METHODS FOR REACHING OUT TO THE RESIDENTS OF YOUR COUNTY TO COMMUNICATE THE WORK OF YOUR OFFICE AND THE "WHY"?

I have found that showing up in the various communities in the county has been an effective way of communicating the work of the county. I have visited all 49 jurisdictions, twice, to ensure they know who I am and understand my desire to work in partnership with them. I also send out a monthly newsletter and put a high priority on constituent services. We also keep the press informed on big issues. During COVID, I hosted weekly virtual meetings with leaders in every community to keep people informed and allow for productive interaction. I also initiated "Community Revitalization Grants" to provide needed gap funding for community economic development projects. These investments have helped strengthen these relationships and remind citizens of the work of the county to improve their communities.

WE HAVE MORE THAN 50 NEW CCAO MEMBERS THIS YEAR. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THEM IN THEIR NEW ROLE?

My advice to new CCAO members would be to approach your work and relationships with an open mind and an eye to getting things done by finding common ground with others. I would also advise them to get involved in CCAO by serving on the board or on a committee. CCAO has a good deal of influence in Columbus and is at its best when members participate in the work.

COULD YOU DISCUSS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH CCAO AS WELL AS THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN ACTIVE MEMBER?

I am currently the 1st Vice President of CCAO and have been on the CCAO Executive Committee for 8 years. CCAO has helped me keep on top of issues that affect Hamilton County and has also provided a vehicle for my opinions and concerns to be elevated in conversations with the legislature. The team is fantastic and is constantly working to balance the interests of the diverse membership. When I was a state representative, I remember how influential the voice of CCAO was to myself and my fellow legislators.

GUEST COLUMN

Mental Health is a Fundamental Part of Our Whole Health

by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield

As we navigate the complexities of day-to-day life, prioritizing mental wellness is crucial. It's easy to overlook our mental health when dealing with stressors at work or at home, but neglecting it can have significant consequences for our overall well-being.

RECOGNIZING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

It's important to understand the strong link between mental and physical health. Each influences the other in multiple ways. It's not surprising that half of individuals with a behavioral health diagnosis have at least one other chronic condition, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The presence of both mental and physical health conditions increases healthcare costs for patients and lowers their adherence to important health management steps, like taking medications as prescribed, eating healthy, and getting enough exercise. This highlights the importance of addressing mental health as a core component of whole health.

TIPS FOR MAINTAINING MENTAL WELLNESS

- Embrace sunlight. Take advantage of natural sunlight. Spending time outdoors, even for short periods, can significantly boost your mood and energy levels.
- Establish a routine. Consistent sleep, healthy eating, and activity schedules can provide a sense of stability and control, reducing feelings of anxiety, fatigue, and depression.
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation. Incorporate mindfulness techniques like deep breathing or meditation into your daily routine. These practices can help manage stress and promote a sense of calm.
- Stay connected to people, even when you prefer to stay home. Maintaining relationships with friends and family is vital for mental well-being. While spending time together in person is ideal, you can also stay in touch with people by phone, video calls, and text messaging.
- Limit overexposure to news and social media. While staying informed is important, constant exposure to negative news and social media can be detrimental to your mental health. Set boundaries and take breaks.
- Seek professional help when needed. Recognize that seeking help is a sign of strength. If you're struggling, don't hesitate to reach out to a mental health professional.

UTILIZE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield provides a wealth of resources to support mental health wellness. Mental health conditions affect many people, and it is important to remember it's okay to not be okay and to seek help if needed. Anthem offers guidance on managing several mental health conditions, including anxiety and stress, suicide prevention, and caring for children's mental health at anthem.com/mental-health.

ACCESSING HELP ONLINE

For convenient access to mental health professionals, consider Anthem's telehealth option, LiveHealth Online. The platform offers virtual therapy sessions with licensed therapists and psychologists, addressing concerns like stress, anxiety, depression, and relationship issues. Find more information through the Sydney Health mobile app, or online at livehealthonline.com/therapy.

By prioritizing our mental health and utilizing available resources, we can navigate life's challenges with greater resilience, making life more enjoyable.



Healthier communities lead to healthier people

We believe that people are only as healthy as the communities they live in. Anthem values and nurtures our local ties — it's why we have been working with CEBCO since 2004. Together, we can improve overall health, advance equity, and strengthen communities.

Anthem

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CEBCO NEWS

CEBCO Health and Wellness



Kevin Hinkle

Managing Director, Health and Wellness

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Managing Director of Health and Wellness for CEBCO. I'm honored by the trust you have placed in me and look forward to working with our team and Board of Directors to advance CEBCO's mission of providing cost-effective, high-quality employee benefit programs for Ohio's counties. Together we will build upon CEBCO's strong history of financial stability, collaboration, innovation, and service. I also want to recognize and congratulate Mike Kindell on his recent retirement; know he is enjoying Colorado!

Please feel free to contact me at khinkle@ccao.org if I may be of assistance to you and your team. I look forward to seeing you soon!

CEBCO ANNUAL MEETING

CEBCO held its Annual Membership Meeting on April 4 with over 115 guests present, including the CEBCO Board, CEBCO county commissioners, elected officials, staff, along with consultants, and vendor partners. Commissioners Mike Welch (Ashland), Matt Aultman (Darke), Jon Rupp (Fulton), and Steve Robinson (Union) were each re-elected to serve another three-year term on the Board of Directors. Presentations included 2024 financial results and a CEBCO program overview. In her remarks, Cheryl Subler recognized retiring Managing Director Mike Kindell and thanked him for his eleven years of service to CEBCO and his leadership in growing the program.

CEBCO BOARD RETREAT AND MEDICAL/PHARMACY VENDORS

The CEBCO Board of Directors met at the end of April for our Annual Board Retreat. The initial order of business was to elect officers and the following commissioners were re-elected to serve in their current positions: President —Cory Noonan (Allen County); Vice-President—Harry Brady (Huron County); Secretary —J.P. Ducro (Ashtabula County); and Treasure—Bryan Davis (Scioto County). The board approved the hiring of Kevin Hinkle as the new Managing Director of CEBCO, effective 6/1/25, to succeed Mike Kindell. The board also approved maintaining the Wellness Program in its current form for the period 7/1/25 – 6/30/26. Our actuarial consultant, Aon, provided various scenarios for the board to consider as they make financial decisions in preparation for pre-renewal discussions.

In addition, Aon presented the preliminary results received from the Medical and the Pharmacy vendor RFP process.

Since the conclusion of the Retreat, top Medical and Pharmacy vendor candidates were scheduled for finalist presentations to meet with the CEBCO Board and staff. The CEBCO Board has voted to approve Anthem and Carelon/Anthem as our medical/pharmacy vendor for a three-year contract effective January 2026.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The CEBCO Board of Directors formed two subcommittees earlier this year which include a variety of board and staff members. The Finance Committee is chaired by Commissioner Bryan Davis (Scioto), and includes members Jeff Benton (Delaware), Cory Noonan (Allen), Jon Rupp (Fulton), and Mike Welch (Ashland). The Wellness Committee is chaired by Commissioner Harry Brady (Huron), and includes members J.P. Ducro (Ashtabula), Steve Hess (Champaign), and Mike Welch (Ashland). We appreciate the active engagement and participation of our board members on these vital committees. They are meeting on a monthly basis and share information and make recommendations to the larger board on financial and wellness programming issues and strategy.

WELLNESS TOPICS

Wellness topics that are being emphasized this summer from Anthem include: Childhood Vaccines, Preventive Care Guidelines, Cyberbullying, Teenage Mental Health, and Understanding Menopause. Please use the following links to learn simple steps to help improve your and your family's overall health.

Protecting your child with vaccines | Preventive Care Plans & Guidelines (Anthem) | Keeping Kids Safe From Cyberbullying (Anthem) | How to Support Teenage Mental Health | What To Know About Menopaus (Anthem)

Please feel free to contact our Wellness Coordinator, Hannah McKee, at hmckee@ccao.org if you have questions or need assistance with your wellness programming needs.

CCAO RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION NEWS

CCAO Foundation Announces 2025 Ohio Counties Scholarship Recipients

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION



Steve Caraway
Managing Director of Enterprise and Retirement Services

The CCAO Research and Educational Foundation is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025 Ohio Counties Scholarship. This year, five outstanding students from across the state have been selected to receive scholarships in recognition of their academic excellence, commitment to community, and aspirations to pursue careers in public service.

From over 125 applications submitted by students planning to attend college or technical school, the following regional recipients were selected:

Northeast Ohio:
Angela Freeman, Summit County

Southwest Ohio:
Halle Ann Jones, Highland County

Southeast Ohio:
Anna Ritter, Washington County

Central Ohio:
Katelyn Wynkoop, Fairfield County

Northwest Ohio:
Keaton P. Foster, Van Wert County

Each recipient demonstrated exceptional leadership potential and a clear dedication to making a difference in their communities and beyond.

The CCAO Research and Educational Foundation extends a **special thank you to Aon** for their generous $2,000 donation, which underwrote one of this year's scholarships. Aon serves as a valued partner of CEBCO and continues to support the mission of building strong counties through education and service.

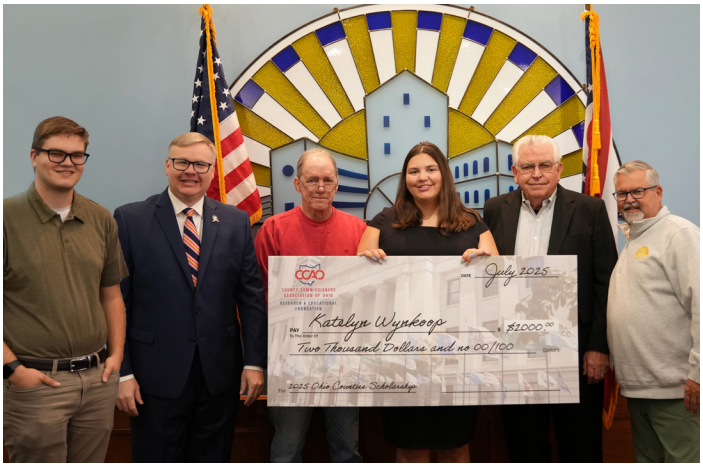
Founded in 1991 as a not-for-profit charitable foundation of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization. The Foundation secures grants and donations to provide high-quality information, tools, and training for county leaders and the citizens they serve.

To support the scholarship fund and invest in Ohio's future public servants, please visit: ccao.org/foundation.

Congratulations to the 2025 scholarship recipients! We look forward to the difference you will make.



Halle's parents, 2025 Southwest Ohio recipient Halle Jones, CCAO's Steve Caraway and Highland County Commissioners David Daniels, Brad Roades and Terry Britton.



Katelyn's brother, Dillon, CCAO's Steve Caraway, Central Ohio recipient Katelyn Wynkoop and Fairfield County Commissioners Steve Davis, Dave Levacy and Jeff Fix.



Keaton's Mother, Kelly, CCAO's Tim Hoverman, Northwest Ohio recipient Keaton Foster and Van Wert County Commissioners Todd Wolfrum and Stan Owens.

Additional scholarship presentations are scheduled and will be featured in the next County Leader.

CORSA NEWS

CORSA Board Reflections and Staff Updates



Ali Redmond

CORSA Membership Services Manager



CORSA Board Members Wood County Commissioner Craig LaHote – Vice President,, Ottawa County Commissioner Mark Stahl – Secretary, and Guernsey County Commissioner David Wilson – President.

As the CORSA Board of Directors reach their mid-year mark, our newest members shared their reflections on their first six months of service, highlighting the value, dedication, and collaborative spirit that define the board's work. "My first six months on the CORSA board have been interesting and insightful," said Commissioner Harry Brady of Huron County. "The opportunity to gain experience from, and work with, so many capable directors is a privilege for which I am grateful. Seeing the work being done to help counties keep their costs down while maintaining peace of mind of being covered in case of a loss is extremely rewarding. I look forward to serving on this board for the foreseeable future.

Commissioner Jim Justice of Ashland County echoed the sentiment: "It is a real pleasure serving on the CORSA Board. The members of this board have been welcoming and very professional. You can see the dedication to our goals reflected in the results, especially in coverage and premiums. John Brownlee and the staff make this board one you should not pass up if given the chance to serve.

"Outgoing Board President Dan Dean told me that the CORSA board is a working board—not one where you just show up to meetings. How true that is! It takes time to get up to speed and to be able to make a meaningful contribution, but I've enjoyed the learning experience so far," said Commissioner Gary Scherer of Pickaway County.

STAFF TRANSITIONS AND NEW FACES



CORSA also marked a significant transition this spring with the retirement of **Ken Hilty,** Law Enforcement Risk Consultant, in March 2025. Ken's 15 years of service were instrumental in helping members mitigate risk in law enforcement. The Board and staff extend their sincere thanks for his dedication and expertise.

NEW CORSA STAFF



Aaron Shirley has joined the Claims team as a Claims Representative. Aaron, originally from Choctaw in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Wilmington University. He has five years of experience working in the financial services industry.



Larry Sims has joined the Risk Management team as a Risk Control Consultant for Law Enforcement. Larry is a native of Muskingum County and currently lives in Delaware County. He began his law enforcement career in 1978 and has accumulated over 46 years of experience, serving in both the Muskingum and Warren County Sheriff's Offices. He also held the position of Warren County Sheriff for 16 years.

CCAO LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	David Painter, Clermont County Commissioner
1st Vice President	Denise Driehaus, Hamilton County Commissioner
2nd Vice President	Casey Kozlowski, Ashtabula County Commissioner
Treasurer	Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive
Secretary	Joe Antram, Logan County Commissioner
Member	Glenn Miller, Henry County Commissioner
Member	Tony Anderson, Fayette County Commissioner

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melissa Bell	Muskingum County Commissioner
Harry Brady	Huron County Commissioner
Tim Bubb	Licking County Commissioner
Sabrina Christian-Bennett	Portage County Commissioner
Bryan Davis	Scioto County Commissioner
J.P. Dutton	Belmont County Commissioner
Julie Ehemann	Shelby County Commissioner
Lenny Eliason	Athens County Commissioner
Jack Everson	Ross County Commissioner
Jeffrey Fix	Fairfield County Commissioner
Pete Gerken	Lucas County Commissioner
Dick Gould	Greene County Commissioner
Mike Halleck	Columbiana County Commissioner
Steve Hambley	Medina County Commissioner
Steven Hess	Champaign County Commissioner
Jonathan Hofstetter	Wayne County Commissioner
Shannon Jones	Warren County Commissioner
David Kern	Defiance County Commissioner
Gary Merrell	Delaware County Commissioner
Scott Miller	Sandusky County Commissioner
Amy Norris	Harrison County Commissioner
John O'Grady	Franklin County Commissioner
Scott Owen	Perry County Commissioner
Chris Ronayne	Cuyahoga County Executive
Rachael Vonderhaar	Preble County Commissioner
Donnie Willis	Jackson County Commissioner
Melanie Wilt	Clark County Commissioner

CORSA LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Dave Wilson, Guernsey County Commissioner
Vice President	Craig LaHote, Wood County Commissioner
Treasurer	Gary Merrell, Delaware County Commissioner
Secretary	Mark Stahl, Ottawa County Commissioner
Director	Harry Brady, Huron County Commissioner
Director	Jim Justice, Ashland County Commissioner
Director	Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner
Director	Charlie Schilling, Washington County Commissioner
Director	Gary Scherer, Pickaway County Commissioner

CEBCO LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner
Vice President	Harry Brady, Huron County Commissioner
Treasurer	Bryan Davis, Scioto County Commissioner
Secretary	J.P. Ducro, Ashtabula County Commissioner
Member	Matt Aultman, Darke County Commissioner
Member	Jeff Benton, Delaware County Commissioner
Member	Lenny Eliason, Athens County Commissioner
Member	Steven Hess, Champaign County Commissioner
Member	Steve Robinson, Union County Commissioner
Member	Jon Rupp, Fulton County Commissioner
Member	Mike Welch, Ashland County Commissioner
Member	Bartley Westfall, Williams County Commissioner

CCAO COMMITTEES

Agriculture and Rural Affairs
Chair: Jonathan Hofstetter, Wayne County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Tony Anderson, Fayette County Commissioner

General Government and Operations
Chair: John O'Grady, Franklin County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Bill Pursel, Knox County Commissioner

Human Services
Chair: Kathryn Whittington, Ashtabula County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Carolyn Rice, Montgomery County Commissioner

Jobs, Economic Development and Infrastructure
Chair: Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Judy Dodge, Montgomery County Commissioner

Justice and Public Safety
Chair: Barb Lewis, Delaware County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Terry Britton, Highland County Commissioner

Metropolitan and Regional Affairs
Chair: Lisa Sobecki, Lucas County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Kevin Boyce, Franklin County Commissioner

Small County Affairs
Chair: Donnie Willis, Jackson County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Tony Montgomery, Pike County Commissioner

Taxation and Finance
Chair: Gary Scherer, Pickaway County Commissioner
Vice Chair: Steve Davis, Fairfield County Commissioner

Water Quality Task Force
Co-Chair: Pete Gerken, Lucas County Commissioner
Co-Chair: Beth Seibert, Allen County Commissioner

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County Leader, CCAO's quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio's 88 counties. The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association. If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Stephen Pflug at spflug@ccao.org or 614-220-7986.