



STATEHOUSE REPORT

Published by: County Commissioners Association of Ohio

209 East State Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-4309
Phone: 614-221-5627 • Fax: 614-221-6986 • www.ccao.org

February 13, 2026

General Assembly releases community project application for capital budget

Last week, the General Assembly began sharing the [application that local communities need to use](#) to apply for community project funding for this year's capital budget. The application requires specific information, including a brief project description, the asset/facility owner, the total project cost, and other funding sources.

The deadline to submit applications is March 12.

The community project portion of the capital bill provides an opportunity for local governments, nonprofits, and other community organizations to receive state infrastructure funding. Some of the community projects the Constitution allows funding for are parks, trails, theaters, jails, museums, and sports facilities.

The Office of Budget and Management [has a list](#) of project types that either cannot be funded through community project funds, are funded through other sources, or have traditionally been deemed unfundable. If you submit a project that falls into one of these categories, it will likely be denied.

This capital budget cycle, the General Assembly is using a single, streamlined community project application to streamline the process for local governments. If you are interested in securing capital for a project, we recommend reaching out to your representative(s) and senator(s). After you have submitted the forms, you should schedule meetings with your representative(s) and senator(s) to discuss the project.

Site visits can be effective in conveying the need for a project. Securing supporting statements from other local governments and community organizations, or submitting a joint request, can help demonstrate broad local support for a project.

Given limited funds and a highly competitive process, you should verify that any projects you submit are eligible for bonding. If a project is not bondable, it cannot be funded through the capital budget. Additionally, while you can submit multiple requests, it is recommended that applicants focus on a single strong project and provide all requested information by the required deadline.

Legislators compile a list of potential projects in their districts and submit them to the chamber leadership. The leadership of each chamber, likely in coordination with the other chamber and the Governor's Office, then goes through the lists and provides appropriations until they hit the target amount for each county.

Projects that are higher on a member's list are more likely to get funded than projects lower on the list. Some members may add every proposed project in their district to their list, so it is important to work with your members to ensure the project ranks higher than others.

Public safety entities express concerns with foreign built drone ban

[Senate Bill 180](#) (Senator Terry Johnson), which would ban public entities from operating aerial drones manufactured in countries designated "foreign adversaries" by the Secretary of State, received its fourth hearing this week in the Senate Transportation Committee. SB 180 would also prohibit state funds from being used in connection with drones from a foreign adversary.

The committee heard opposition testimony from volunteer fire departments, sheriff's offices, police departments, and other public entities that are using these drones for public safety services.

Opponents argued that this legislation would ground most drones used by local governments and force these agencies to retire fully functional aircraft before they reach the end of their service life. Additionally, the mandate created by this bill would impose a financial burden on departments to replace their current drone fleets ahead of schedule.

SB 180 also prohibits the use of state funds for restricted drones, which could prevent public entities from contracting with or entering into cooperative agreements with those who use foreign-made drones. Opponents expressed concern that this would affect multi-state responses to natural disasters or other emergencies and the ability to contract with specialized contractors for search-and-rescue or recovery operations.

The committee accepted an amendment delaying the start of the ban on public entities from May 1, 2027, to four years after the legislation's effective date. Witnesses said the change was a step in the right direction because it would reduce the likelihood that drones would have to be retired prematurely, but the bill's core issues remained.

CCAO does not currently have a position on the bill.

OPD delivers update on reimbursement rate and upcoming initiatives to CCAO Board

Earlier today, State Public Defender Elizabeth Miller and her staff delivered an update to the CCAO board. First and foremost, she confirmed an 82% reimbursement rate for the remainder of the fiscal year. Reimbursement requests from counties spiked in October at approximately \$20 million (likely due to the three paydays that occurred in the month) but otherwise have hovered between \$18 million and \$19 million each month.

Public Defender Miller also provided an update on the Northwest Regional Hub, one of CCAO's budget priorities last year. This separately funded pilot program utilizes OPD staff to provide indigent defense on behalf of Allen, Putnam, and Hardin Counties in the northwest part of the state. One of the goals of the hub is to identify efficiencies in this delivery model, with the hope that this model can be expanded to additional counties in the next budget.

She also provided an update on the performance audit that is currently being conducted by the Auditor of State to evaluate and recommend efficiencies and system delivery models across the state.

She discussed a new requirement for counties to submit a county indigent defense cost projection report by July 31. The report must include the county's projected expenditures on indigent defense operation and delivery for the upcoming state biennium. OPD staff is available to help counties fill out this report. If you need help getting in touch with their staff, please reach out to the CCAO Policy Team.

While there is no penalty for not submitting the information, counties are encouraged to submit this information to OPD. OPD will use this information to develop an estimated cost of the system statewide and allow them to make an informed budget request to fully fund the system for the next administration. Typically, if funding for a program is included in the Governor's version of the budget, it is more likely that the funding will end up in the final version of the budget.

A link with additional information about the cost projection report and submission instructions can be found [here](#).

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

The following committees held hearings this week regarding bills that may interest counties.

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources

- [Senate Bill 329](#) (Senators Paula Hicks-Hudson and Kent Smith): To expressly prohibit the surface application of brine from oil and gas wells on roads.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 420](#) (Representative Gary Click and Bernard Willis): To disallow and, by 2030, eliminate property taxes levied for a continuing period of time.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate General Government

- [Senate Joint Resolution 7](#) (Senator Bill Blessing, III): Proposing to amend the Constitution of the State of Ohio to authorize land value taxes.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 262](#) (Senator Bill Blessing, III): To require a public authority or other party to a construction contract to note variations from an industry standard form.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

Senate Ways and Means

- [Senate Bill 307](#) (Senator Jane Timken): To allow funding for police and firefighting facilities in tax increment financing arrangements.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 285](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): To exempt agricultural land converted to certain conservation uses from recoupment charges.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony from the Stream and Wetlands Foundation

Senate Local Government

- [Senate Bill 281](#) (Senator Kristina Roegner): To authorize a board of county commissioners, on its own behalf, to award a franchise for the operation of a public transit system.
 - Third hearing, interested party testimony from Delaware County Transit and the Lake County Regional Transit Authority.
 - **AMENDED** to clarify the reporting requirements on franchises for the operation of public transit systems.

Introduction of Bills

The following bill(s) that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week:

- [House Bill 692](#) (Representatives Justin Pizzulli and Marilyn John): To make changes to the law governing household sewage treatment systems.
- [House Bill 695](#) (Representatives Adam Bird and Brian Stewart): To prohibit certain local elected officials from entering into nondisclosure agreements.
- [House Bill 696](#) (Representative D.J. Swearingen): To modify the jurisdiction of the Erie County prosecuting attorney.
- [Senate Bill 356](#) (Senator Kyle Koehler): To temporarily increase the amount of the homestead exemptions and to declare an emergency.
- [Senate Bill 359](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): To modify the tax enforcement authority of the Department of Taxation, municipal tax administrators, county treasurers, and the Board of Tax Appeals and to modify a sales tax exemption for automated car wash services.

- [Senate Bill 361](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): To prohibit the use of eminent domain for recreational trails.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may be of interest to counties. Other committees will likely meet as well, but as of press time for Statehouse Report, they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

If you would like to offer testimony on any bill, please visit the committee page and contact the committee chair's office for instructions on how to submit testimony.

Tuesday, February 17

[House Technology and Innovation](#) (10:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 413](#) (Representatives Tom Young and Bob Peterson): To create the Ohio Local Government Expenditure Database and require political subdivision participation, to require the state retirement systems to participate in the Ohio State Government Expenditure Database, and to make an appropriation.
 - Fourth hearing, opponent testimony and interested party testimony
- [House Bill 646](#) (Representatives Gary Click and Kellie Deeter): To create the Data Center Study Commission and to declare an emergency.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

[Senate General Government](#) (2:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 262](#) (Senator Bill Blessing, III): To require a public authority or other party to a construction contract to note variations from an industry standard form.
 - Fourth hearing, no testimony
 - **POSSIBLE VOTE**
- [Senate Bill 361](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): To prohibit the use of eminent domain for recreational trails.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

[Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) (3:00 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 329](#) (Senators Paula Hicks-Hudson and Kent Smith): To expressly prohibit the surface application of brine from oil and gas wells on roads.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony

Wednesday, February 18

[House Natural Resources](#) (9:00 a.m.)

- [House Bill 522](#) (Representatives Kevin Ritter and Adam Bird): Regarding federal mineral royalty payments.
 - Third hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTE BILL**
- [Senate Bill 219](#) (Senator Al Landis): To make changes to the law governing oil and gas wells and to address federal mineral royalty payments.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and proponent testimony

House Development (9:45 a.m.)

- [House Bill 147](#) (Representative Brian Lorenz): To require the Tax Credit Authority to grant a sales and use tax exemption to construction contractors for certain projects.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony
- [House Bill 284](#) (Representatives Mark Hiner and Erika White): To require iron or steel that is produced in the United States be used on projects supported by state funds.
 - Fourth hearing, all testimony
 - **POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS**

House Ways and Means (11:30 a.m.)

- [House Bill 420](#) (Representatives Gary Click and Bernard Willis): To disallow and, by 2030, eliminate property taxes levied for a continuing period of time.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony
- [House Bill 504](#) (Representative Angie King): To authorize counties to temporarily exempt a portion of property's increased value from taxation following a reappraisal.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
 - **POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS**