



SUMMER 2026

COUNTY LEADER



FEATURING

Announcing the 2026-2027 Corporate Partnership Program

Celebrating America's 250th Birthday

Summit County Government Services Streamlining

Logan County's Tribute to Veterans



COVER: Ottawa County hosted the CCAO/CEAO Northwest District Meeting.

ABOVE:

1: Portage County Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett represented county government at this year's Buckeye Girls State.

2: The Clermont County Commissioners and Representatives Jean Schmidt and Adam Bird recently participated in the groundbreaking for Veterans Village, a new development featuring 19 fully furnished homes designed to help veterans build stability and independence.

3: Marion County hosted the CCAO/CEAO Central District Meeting.

4: CCAO members and staff attended the NACo Annual Meeting in July.

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A MESSAGE FROM 2026 CCAO PRESIDENT



Denise Driehaus

CCAO President, Hamilton County Commissioner

As we head into the full swing of summer and enjoy the sizzling temperatures, family vacations, and county fairs, we are also celebrating America-250 – a commemoration where Ohioans all across our 88 counties spotlight their impact on the story of our country.

These celebrations throughout the remainder of the year give us the unique opportunity to showcase our counties and what makes them unique. From Williams County to Washington County, and from Ashtabula County to Hamilton County, we each have something special to share, or something that makes us stand out from our neighboring counties. Here in Hamilton County, for example, each of our jurisdictions are engaging with America-250 all in their own different ways – the City of Cheviot conducted a bell tower and clock dedication, Symmes Township held a scavenger hunt, and the City of Reading carried out a community rock painting. This summer, I encourage all of you to engage with America-250 in your own communities and observe this one-of-a-kind chance to exhibit the places, people, and practices that make your county so special.

America-250 also represents a chance to learn from one another. We can learn notable aspects of our region's history, concepts for new events or traditions, or even novel ways to engage with our constituents. This summer contains additional occasions to learn from one another, including CCAO's Summer Symposium in August. Sharing information and discussing ideas is what makes CCAO so effective – and each and every one of you are an integral part of this equation.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of your summer, and I look forward to seeing you at Summer Symposium at the end of August! This year, I am thrilled to welcome you to Hamilton County, where we will have many chances to collaborate with each other while also experiencing the cultural tapestry of the Cincinnati region.



THANK YOU

to our Corporate Partners for their support!

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PARTICIPATING



FEATURE Announcing the 2026-2027 Corporate Partnership Program



Tim Hoverman

Managing Director of IT/Operations

As we enter a new year of serving Ohio's Counties, we are proud to introduce our 2026-2027 Corporate Partnership Program. Our Corporate Partners play a key role in helping fund CCAO's mission to support Ohio counties. Their partnerships provide vital support for CCAO's day-to-day operations, educational programming, policy advocacy, and non-partisan research on behalf of county governments state-wide. They allow the association to maintain a strong voice at the Statehouse and continuously expand the resources, training, and support services available to county officials.

To all our returning sponsors: thank you for your continued trust and dedication. Your commitment reinforces our organizational strength and ensures CCAO can fulfill its mission year after year.

We are also very pleased to welcome several new organizations to the program this year. Their financial support directly strengthens CCAO's ability to serve local leaders. Please join us in welcoming our newest 2026-2027 corporate partners:

PINNACLE

- Amazon Business
- Enterprise Fleet Management

PREMIER

- Wessler Engineering

PARTICIPATING

- Alynea
- AT&T
- Montrose Group, LLC

If you are interested in becoming a CCAO Corporate Partner, please contact CCAO's Tim Hoverman thoverman@ccao.org or Steve Caraway scaraway@ccao.org.



Jake Heffron, Municipal Sales Specialist for Rumpke Waste & Recycling, with Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus at a past CCAO Summer Symposium.



Kirk Mizerek, Executive Vice President for Palmer Energy Company, speaking with CCAO members at a past CCAO Summer Symposium.

LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly's Heroes: Leadership Lessons for County Government



Cheryl Subler

CCAO Executive Director

Many of us remember the 1970 classic *Kelly's Heroes*. On the surface, it is a World War II adventure film starring Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, and Don Rickles. Yet beneath the humor and action is a story about leadership, teamwork, problem solving, and accomplishing what initially seems impossible.

While county government is certainly not a Hollywood movie, there are lessons from *Kelly's Heroes* that resonate with the work of Ohio's county officials every day.

The unlikely group of soldiers in the film came from different backgrounds, possessed different personalities, and often disagreed on how to accomplish their mission. Yet each individual brought unique talents to the team. Success came not because everyone thought alike, but because they learned to leverage one another's strengths toward a common objective.

County government operates much the same way.

Ohio's 88 counties are home to various elected officials, appointed leaders, and dedicated public servants who represent different perspectives, political philosophies, and professional backgrounds. Commissioners work alongside sheriffs, auditors, coroners, prosecutors, engineers, treasurers, recorders, clerks, judges, boards of developmental disabilities, children services agencies, veterans service commissions, boards of elections and others. While each office or entity has distinct statutory responsibilities, citizens expect all to work together.

The challenges facing counties today rarely fit neatly within one office or one level of government. Property tax reform, behavioral health, workforce shortages, infrastructure, economic development, housing, cybersecurity, emergency preparedness, child protection, and caring for an people with developmental disabilities require collaboration that extends beyond traditional boundaries.

That is where associations like the County Commissioners Association of Ohio become indispensable.

One of CCAO's greatest strengths is bringing county leaders together around shared challenges. We create opportunities to exchange ideas, learn from one another, build relationships, and develop practical solutions. When counties speak collectively, they have a stronger voice in Columbus and are better positioned to shape sound public policy.

Like the characters in *Kelly's Heroes*, county leaders

understand that no one succeeds alone.

One county may have developed an innovative workforce initiative. Another may have found a creative solution to managing infrastructure projects. Through CCAO, those ideas become resources for every county, strengthening local government across Ohio.

The movie also reminds us that perseverance matters. The soldiers encountered obstacle after obstacle, adapting as circumstances changed while remaining focused on their objective. County leaders understand this reality all too well. Legislative changes, fiscal pressures, unfunded mandates, and unexpected emergencies continually reshape the landscape in which counties operate. Success requires resilience, adaptability, and the willingness to keep moving forward even when the path is uncertain.

Perhaps the greatest lesson from *Kelly's Heroes* is that trust is built long before it is needed. The team's success depended upon relationships forged through shared experiences and confidence in one another's abilities.

The same principle applies to county government. The relationships commissioners, county executives and county councils build with fellow county officials, neighboring counties, state leaders, and association partners become invaluable when difficult issues arise. Whether responding to a natural disaster, navigating property tax reform, or advocating for county priorities before the General Assembly, trusted relationships make collaboration possible.

CCAO exists to strengthen those relationships.

Our mission is to connect county leaders, elevate best practices, advocate for effective public policy, and ensure counties remain strong partners in delivering the essential services Ohioans rely upon every day.

The heroes in *Kelly's Heroes* may have been fictional, yet the heroes serving Ohio's counties are very real. They are the commissioners, county executives and county council members making difficult budget decisions, the county employees responding to emergencies at all hours, as well as the other elected officials and public servants who quietly improve the quality of life for their fellow citizens.

They may never appear on the silver screen, yet their commitment, professionalism, and dedication deserve recognition.

Every day, Ohio's county leaders demonstrate that when people with different experiences unite behind a common mission, remarkable things can be accomplished.

That is a lesson worth remembering, both in the movies and in county government.

POLICY UPDATE Data Center Policy Discussions



Adam Schwiebert

CCAO Managing Director of Policy

Few issues generated more discussion at the Statehouse this spring than data centers. The same has been true in many county courthouses, township halls, and community meetings across Ohio. Counties that only a few years ago gave little thought to data centers are now grappling with questions about how these projects fit into their long-term plans. As Ohio continues to attract billions of dollars in private investment for data center projects, lawmakers have increasingly turned their attention to the opportunities and challenges these facilities present for Ohio and its local communities.

Data centers have quickly become one of Ohio's fastest-growing sectors. These facilities bring substantial private investment, expand local tax bases, support construction jobs, and generate demand for new infrastructure. For some counties, they represent a significant opportunity for economic growth.

At the same time, data center expansion has prompted important public policy questions from commissioners and the general public alike. Lawmakers spent much time this spring examining issues ranging from electricity demand and generation capacity, water consumption, environmental impacts, local economic development incentives, nondisclosure agreements, and the state's existing sales tax exemption.

The breadth of these issues, and the pace at which new projects are being announced, prompted legislative leaders to create the Select Committee on Data Centers earlier this year. Rather than focusing on a single issue, lawmakers sought to examine the broader policy framework surrounding data center development and determine whether Ohio's laws remain well suited for this rapidly evolving industry. Throughout late May and early June, the committee, comprised of House and Senate lawmakers, heard testimony from technology companies, electric utilities, environmental organizations, economic development professionals, local governments, and other interested stakeholders.

CCAO was pleased to have Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb testify before the committee on behalf of CCAO.

Commissioner Bubb emphasized that counties recognize the significant economic opportunities data centers can provide while also highlighting the challenges counties may encounter with data center development. Among the issues highlighted by Commissioner Bubb was Ohio's sales tax exemption for qualifying data center equipment. Because county piggyback sales taxes mirror the state sales tax base, the exemption also reduces county sales tax collections. With the exemption now estimated to exceed \$1.5 billion in forgone state revenue, CCAO continues to support its repeal.

As the General Assembly prepared to conclude its legislative work in mid-June, lawmakers attempted to assemble a comprehensive package addressing many of the issues raised during the committee's work. Although negotiations continued until the final hours before adjournment, consensus ultimately proved elusive, and the legislation stalled.

The conversation surrounding data centers is far from over. With lawmakers expected to revisit the issue during the anticipated lame duck session, counties will have an important opportunity to help shape policies that encourage economic growth while recognizing the unique responsibilities counties have in planning for these large-scale projects. CCAO will continue working to ensure county voices remain at the table as those discussions continue.



FEATURE ‘Summit Connects’ Continues County’s Theme of Collaboration to Streamline Government Services

by Kent Cahlander, Guest Writer

The connecting aspect of Summit County’s 130-mile fiber optics project, which will eventually link first responders and other government agencies in all 31 of its communities, is one of many ways officials in the state’s first charter-based county have applied a collaborative approach to deploy technology for improving government efficiencies.

[Summit Connects](#), a project that started in 2022 with federal funding under the American Rescue Plan Act, began with underground work in the City of Stow several months ago and is nearing completion later this summer. Once complete, the network operated by the county with support from the City of Fairlawn, will serve as the backbone of an enhanced system of delivering public safety and other critical government services.

That project and other county initiatives, which include first responder dispatch consolidation, virtual court services, and a joint building department that now serves nearly all the county’s communities, have resulted as much from nurturing trust and relationships between those entities as it has from benefitting by the latest technological advances, according to county officials.

That “recipe for success,” as described by her top staffers, is an approach that’s been embraced by Summit County Executive [Ilene Shapiro](#).

“Technology is only part of the equation,” Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro said. “The real driver of progress is the willingness of communities to work together, build trust and share a common commitment to serving residents. By investing in strong relationships, we’ve been able to pursue innovative, cost-effective solutions that no single community could accomplish alone. Collaboration has become the foundation for delivering better services while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.”

Brian Nelsen, the Executive’s chief of staff, said the county’s unifying approach to government services was born in part out of necessity as the Great Recession and other fiscal challenges emerged over the years.

“Our response to that and everything that has transpired since has been we have to live within our means,” he said. “We have to figure out how to work smarter.”

While that approach has included the deployment of technology in several ways, Greta Johnson, assistant chief of staff and director of communications for the county, said community outreach is just as important.

“As much as it is embracing tech, it’s also building relationships,” she said. The approach that has been so successful with the Summit Connects rollout stemmed from



Executive Shapiro cuts the ribbon during the opening celebration of the consolidated 9-1-1 dispatch center.

the trust fostered with communities during the 911 dispatch consolidation.

“The 911 dispatch center was really one of the first big tech projects that gave the county the credibility to move forward with that,” Johnson said.

“The Executive and our team have done a really good job of listening. We have 31 different communities and everything from the county seat of Akron, which has roughly 180,000 folks, down to a village with about 400. So trying to meet the needs of all of those communities took a lot of meetings.”

“I believe strongly that when we’re talking about collaborating with the intent of saving money for these communities, it has to start with trust,” Johnson added.

DISPATCHING UNITY

City of Tallmadge Mayor Carol Siciliano-Kilway saw the level of trust between Summit County communities build over several years as discussions ensued over the concept of consolidating 9-1-1 dispatching services in the county. She witnessed the evolution of those plans as a member of city council for 12 years, and credits her predecessor, former Mayor David Kline, for his leadership on that front along with the encouragement of Executive Shapiro.

“During my whole time on council this is something that had been talked about,” she said. “Prior to this joint dispatch center, everybody had their own dispatch center or they contracted with one.”

Noting the high cost of operating individual dispatching centers, Tallmadge, where the county-owned consolidated center is located, had previously forged an agreement with

Stow on shared services, the mayor said. “We could see how easily it was for someone to dispatch outside of their own municipality, and it still works.”

The broader consolidation got kickstarted in 2018 when discussions, prompted in part by a state government push for joint local services, heated up between several governments in the county to acquire software for a computer-aided dispatching system. In 2022, the county and the cities of Cuyahoga Falls, Fairlawn, Tallmadge and Stow made it official by agreeing to create a Council of Governments (COG) to jointly own and operate the 9-1-1 dispatch center. At the same time, the City of Akron signed an agreement to locate its own dispatch operations in the same facility.

“It was a true collaboration in all senses of the word,” Kilway said.

Along with the original COG governments, the dispatch center also currently serves Boston Heights, Akron-Canton Airport, Copley Township, Coventry Township, City of Green Police Department, Mogadore, Munroe Falls, Northfield Center Township, Silver Lake and Twinsburg Township.

The mayor said that while costs have gone up as new technology has emerged, the communities are spending less than they would have if the dispatching was done separately. An example of the recent advances is the implementation of a CORA system that provides real time guidance for dispatchers to help them handle calls more effectively.

“I’ve watched them use it. They say it’s been a great benefit to them,” the mayor said. “They really do great work down there.”

“It just shows how collaboration works. It’s worked wonderfully for the dispatching center,” she said, and it has led to some ancillary benefits for the community.

Among those are the joint efforts to benefit the Peter Maurin Center in Akron, a provider of services for the homeless long supported by Stow Mayor John Pribonic.

After the dispatching center collaboration came together, Pribonic reached out to the participating mayors on a broadened effort to support the Maurin Center, Kilway said.

As a result, she said, “Every year we get together and we have a cold-weather clothing drive for the homeless to help the Peter Maurin Center.”

“So yes, I do think this was just like a jumpstart on ‘what can we do together’ besides our providing services to our residents but also to help our communities,” Kilway said.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

Improving services that help communities is the central tenant of the latest county-wide project that has been years in the making and will ultimately provide connectivity to all Summit County governments.

Summit Connects, a project developed in partnership with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, is nearing completion with areas in Fairlawn, Green and Macedonia as the final pieces of the 31-community “fiber ring” that initially will connect every



Former Tallmadge Mayor David Kline, Stow Mayor John Pribonic, Executive Shapiro, Summit County Council Vice President Christine Higham, Munroe Falls Mayor Allen Mavrides and Former County Clerk of Courts Sandra Kurt.

government entity in Summit County.

Ernie Staten, the City of Fairlawn Public Service Director who is overseeing the layout, said the sky is the limit for the benefits that could be realized with technological connectivity.

“The intent is that at some point there will be shared services on it. So it’s not necessarily just first responders,” he said. “It could be a payroll platform or a finance platform that’s shared among communities and distributed through that fiber network.”

Staten said all the linked governments will also be able to tap into [Fairlawn Gig](#), a municipal-run, commercial-grade internet service initiated in 2015 by the city that currently serves more than 70% of all households and 375 of its commercial buildings. Recent upgrades include a \$2 million renovation to the data center housed at the service department.

“It’s a huge success. It’s high quality to every resident,” Staten said.

The fiber initiative is just the latest example of the collaborative efforts in Summit County, he said. “We have partnered with the county in numerous ways over the years.” Fairlawn owns its sewer system but the county maintains it, for example.

Staten said that under the charter-based county government in Summit, “You don’t see the political play that you would in others.”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re a Democrat or Republican or independent. We’ve all got to roll up our sleeves and work together. That’s really the collaborative piece of it that you see. We all see there’s a common goal, and in order to get there, we’re all going to have to work together,” he said.

Staten said the COVID pandemic proved to be a galvanizing event for the county, as Executive Shapiro decided to have a weekly call to provide updates to all 31 communities. “We still have that call. We’ve limited it to once a month, but all 31 communities participate in it,” he said.

Once the underground work on Summit Connects is complete, the plan is to have fiber installed in the remaining



Executive Shapiro recognizes Building Safety Month with Chief Building Official Chris Randles and Division of Building Standards staff.

communities by late summer or early August, Staten said. "Everyone will be connected to the system, and we'll be able to be even more collaborative. I'm sure there's going to be some things that come out of that I can't even think of right now. Fiber optics give you the ability to do the infinite."

SMOOTH TRANSIT

One of those possibilities is nearing reality in the way of an expanded program to keep buses moving more efficiently throughout the county.

Building upon the connectivity advantages of the fiber network, Summit is in the process of securing funds to take a pilot program on Smart Traffic Signalization countywide.

Staten said that system, which employs bus-installed devices that can hold traffic lights green for smoother route traveling, has

been a viable opportunity for a city with busy routes and little room for additional bus-dedicated lanes.

Jarrold Hampshire, Chief of Staff for METRO RTA, said the transit system is teaming up with the county and City of Akron to provide the 20% match for a \$2.5 million [Safe Streets for All](#) grant to fund the expansion.

A former bus driver, Hampshire has witnessed first-hand some of the challenges transit operators face each day to stay on schedule.

"One of the most frustrating things is when you have to stop to let somebody on and in that amount of time the light turns red," he said.

The RTA strives to maintain 15-minute intervals between buses – a schedule that dictates how many buses are needed on a route.



Executive Shapiro presents a proclamation celebrating the consolidated 9-1-1 dispatch center. Pictured with SECC staff and Tallmadge Mayor Carol Siciliano-Kilway, Fairlawn Mayor Russell Sharnsky, Former Stow Police Chief Jeff Film, Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters.

"If I can save 5 minutes, I can redirect resources," he said. A system that holds lights green when buses or emergency vehicles approach, he said, furthers what he called the evolution of transit from dedicated bus lanes to coordinated traffic signaling.

"We're trying to help infrastructure. We're trying to keep traffic moving and not be invasive and inconvenience people in their cars," Hampshire said. "We've gotten to the point where we might not need bus lanes everywhere, but we could tap into the city's infrastructure to keep buses moving with transit signal priority."

"That's why we're getting involved with the county in their push," he continued. "Obviously, they're looking at it from a much broader perspective with getting fiber in and all the utilities, but at the end of the day if we can leverage funding and resources and we can all come together that's good for everybody."

Hampshire echoed other government officials in the county in saying they all try to stay on the same page.

"As a taxpayer, you want to know that your government agencies are not being redundant and duplicating projects that can otherwise be leveraged together. So we're trying to figure out as a transit authority where we can partner up so that everybody is maximizing those federal funds that are available," he said.

"That comes with a local commitment. They want to see that there's local skin in the game to make sure it's a good project and people are actually talking to each other. If we're all working in silos none of this works."

Hampshire said the RTA hopes to obtain the grant funds later this year and see full implementation of the signalization project over the next two years.

CONTINUED COLLABORATION

Other advancements underscoring the teamwork approach in the county include a pandemic-spurred investment to install fiber connectivity for the county's criminal justice system.

County officials said the secure system, which connects the jail, courthouse and treatment facilities, has resulted in long-term cost-savings and improved efficiencies by limiting the transportation of prisoners and allowing for remote court hearings.

"The idea was to build this private network and create hearing rooms within the jail to conduct calls and court hearings to provide more access for attorneys, clergy and family to interact with their people that are in the jail," Nelsen said. Not having to transport several dozen prisoners a day downtown to the courthouse, saves security costs and lessens jail disruptions.

It was another example, he said, of the county answering the question: "How do we work smarter at this?"

Summit County has also found synergies with its efforts to streamline building permitting.

The real driver of progress is the willingness of communities to work together, build trust and share a common commitment to serving residents. By investing in strong relationships, we've been able to pursue innovative, cost-effective solutions that no single community could accomplish alone. Collaboration has become the foundation for delivering better services while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

- Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro

With recent additions, Summit County Building Standards now provides services for nearly all 31 communities in the county including online plan review and permits, Nelsen said. AI integration options are also in the works.

"When I look at what we've accomplished, I don't just see fiber networks, virtual courtrooms or online permitting," County Executive Shapiro said. "I see local governments choosing to work together in ways that strengthen public service while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars."

"By sharing resources, investing wisely and finding more cost-effective ways to deliver services, we've shown that innovation and fiscal responsibility go hand in hand," she added. "Those partnerships have become one of Summit County's greatest assets, and they'll continue to shape how we serve residents and prepare for the future."



GUEST COLUMN Utilities Must be Prepared to Welcome Data Centers, but with Eyes Focused on Special Protections Needed in Water and Sewer Service Agreements

by Stephen Haughey, Partner, FBT Gibbons LLP
Stephen Samuels, Partner, FBT Gibbons LLP
Christina Wieg, Managing Associate, FBT Gibbons LLP

Despite a rash of recent moratoriums issued against the siting of new artificial intelligence (AI) data centers (DCs), they are proliferating across the U.S. at unprecedented rates as the thirst for AI grows. While a few moratoriums are driven in part by concerns about large-scale water needs and associated impacts on water supplies, most are driven by questions about whether short and long-term revenues and employment justify the level of tax incentives being given to DCs.

Although a few DCs are being constructed in remote areas, the vast majority are being built inside the boundaries of a local government to take advantage of existing water and sewer services critical to a DC's operations. Due to a significant downward trend in federal and state funding to local governments, they can seldom afford to reject a potential source of substantial revenue. At the same time, however, local governments must be careful to protect existing and projected future water and sewer infrastructure, service capacities and associated revenue streams.

Depending on the size of the DC, the type of AI technology to be employed, and the type of cooling system to be used for the computers and associated equipment, the volume of water needed can be significant or insignificant. There are many different technologies available for cooling, ranging from old-style cooling towers, which require substantial amounts of water, but use relatively little power, to newer air or evaporative cooling systems and closed-loop, recirculating-liquid cooling systems, which are considerably more expensive to build and operate and require more power, but use very little or no water.

During start-up, when computers are being "trained," cooling water needs can reach several million gallons per day (mgd) even for small DCs, with "hyper" DCs needing considerably more. Thereafter, depending on the type of cooling system, the efficiency can drop significantly during hot summer months, causing water consumption to spike. And depending on the type of cooling system and the hardness of the water supplied, the volume of so-called "dirty" water that cannot be reused and must be discharged can also be substantial.

When a local government is first approached by a developer proposing to build a DC, it is critically important that the local government understand that the developer's first principal interest is to maximize its profits, no less important than a local government's desire to sell water and sewer services and generate additional revenue. For that reason, despite the

availability of a variety of newer, proven technologies for cooling systems, in most, if not nearly all, initial proposals, developers propose to use old-style, water-based cooling towers because they are cheaper to build, easier to operate, and require considerably less power.

If, based on the analysis below, the local government concludes that it can safely provide water and wastewater services in the large quantities needed by a DC that employs such towers, the result can be a win-win for both parties. The local government maximizes revenue generation, while the developer saves on construction and operating costs. But if the analysis shows otherwise, local governments need to understand that developers are willing, and frequently agree, to change their proposed cooling system technology if required to do so, or in response to seeing large proposed impact fees, as discussed below, caused by the large quantities of water and sewer capacity being supplied to the DC.

Importantly, because water and sewer needs are critical to a DC's operations, developers almost always seek a guaranteed minimum level of capacity to be available at all times, a guarantee rarely requested by, much less provided to, other customers. In addition, because water lines can break under the best of circumstances, developers often request a guaranteed back-up or redundant source of water, which may require the local government to add infrastructure or valve-off an additional section of the water distribution system.

Sizing of water supply lines and discharge pipes are typically based on projected needs of current and future customers. For example, a manufacturer requesting a 2-inch service line to deliver 0.5 mgd of water for maximum daily production results in a reservation of such capacity to the manufacturer, but not a guarantee. But if capacity must be guaranteed at high levels requested by a DC, such reservation can substantially reduce the capacity available to serve other existing and future customers. This can lead to a ripple effect that stresses the production at a water treatment plant and the minimum volume of water storage that must be maintained in the system to ensure adequate pressure. This problem can particularly pronounced for small to medium-size public water systems.

While not as severe, a guarantee of substantial sewer capacity to a DC limits the capacity that can be made available to existing or future customers upgradient or downgradient from the DC on the sewer line. Providing these large guarantees may also require a

significant investment to deliver the additional capacity if it is not already available.

In addition, while developers want guaranteed water and sewer capacities, there is no assurance that the DC will use quantities remotely near that capacity most of the year. For example, a developer may receive a guarantee of 2.5 mgd of water, but only use that amount during start-up of the DC or during a particularly hot summer period, while averaging 25% or less of the guaranteed capacity the rest of the year. Nevertheless, due to the guarantee, the local government cannot make the capacity not being used available to other customers. In addition, if large guarantees of capacity are not accompanied by an agreed maximum rate in gallons per minute of water taken or sewer consumption being used, an aggressive rate of consumption by the DC can cause a sudden and significant drop in water tower levels below that needed to maintain the minimum pressure to serve all customers or, for a sewer discharge, can lead to a backup and potential overflow.

These impacts cannot be accounted for by applying standard water and sewer rates, which are based on metered consumption, nor by assessing one-time special fees based on the size of the lines provided to the DC. They must be addressed through “impact fees” that take into account, among other factors, the percentage of the water or sewer system being guaranteed to the DC; the capital investment made to deliver the guaranteed capacity; the average percentage of the guaranteed capacity being used daily; and secondary economic impacts, such as higher operating costs at the water treatment plant to replace reserved capacity, or costs incurred to add storage in the distribution system or increase sewer line capacity. The service agreement also needs to consider whether maximum consumption rates are needed to avoid a sudden drop in water storage or sewer line capacity.

With respect to wastewater, because spent (“dirty”) cooling water typically has very low pollutant loadings, a sudden, high-volume discharge can reduce the efficiency of a biological treatment plant and create compliance issues. That risk is the primary reason why sewer authorities typically prohibit the discharge of stormwater and non-contact cooling waters to the collection system. A special impact fee or restriction on the rate of discharge may be needed to offset such impact. In addition, if the builder wants to discharge spent cooling water at an elevated temperature to save some of the cost of cooling, a special impact fee may also be needed to protect the sewer system and equitably compensate the local government for cost-savings provided to the DC. DCs are also significant developments acreage-wise, and can discharge large quantities of stormwater that can overwhelm a local collection system. In addition to a standard stormwater fee based on square footage of impermeable surface area, a special impact fee may be needed to address a disproportionate impact on the capacity of the system.

Guaranteeing a large percentage of existing capacity to a DC may accelerate long-term capital expansion plans for water/sewer system lines, treatment plants and system storage, to such a degree that if the DC terminates the agreement before sufficient

impact fees are obtained to cover these costs, the utility may incur a substantial economic loss. The utility needs to make sure that the term of the service agreement is guaranteed to be long enough to ensure sufficient revenue to cover such costs, and includes an enforceable termination fee if the DC shuts down before sufficient impact fees are recovered. Utilities will often need to model the potential impacts that large guarantees will have on current capacities and long-term capital plans in order to arrive at fair and equitable impact fees, a minimum term for the service agreement, and an early termination fee.

If local governments want to generate additional water and sewer revenues, they need to support the siting of new DCs or lose such opportunities to neighboring communities. But while supporting such sitings, they must also understand that using standard water and sewer rates and one-time sizing fees for a services agreement can lead to a significant adverse financial impact on the community and, with respect to water, could result in violation of minimum operating requirements. Special impact fees may be needed to protect local water and sewer investments, and account for potential impacts of guaranteeing large water and sewer capacities to a single customer. Local governments also need to understand that a developer’s first proposal is almost always going to be driven primarily by profit motives, and if the local government “pushes back” regarding the type of cooling system to be installed or the proposed impact fees to be charged, developers are willing to address those issues by proposing more-advanced, more-efficient, and less water-intensive cooling systems.

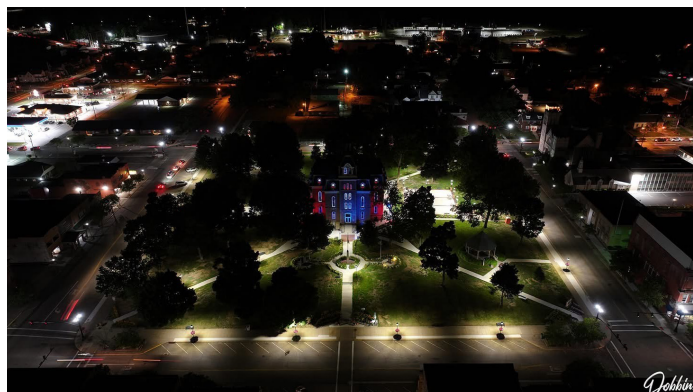
The authors recently developed special impact fees as part of two negotiated service agreements for the siting of DCs in Ohio for two of the world’s largest developers. For one, doing so resulted in compromises between the local government and the developer that reduced impacts and risks to the water utility, while also reducing the amount of impact fees to be paid by the developer, in exchange for an agreement to use advanced cooling technology that required less water and a reduced level of sewer discharge. If you would like to discuss how we can assist your community in evaluating these issues or in the drafting a service agreement for a new DC coming to your area, please contact the authors:

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FEATURE Celebrating America's 250th Birthday

On July 4, America celebrated the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding. In the months leading up to this historic milestone, America 250-Ohio and counties across the state hosted commemorative events, with many celebrations continuing throughout the year. Courthouses served as focal points for the occasion, with many counties decorating their buildings or hosting community events to mark the anniversary.

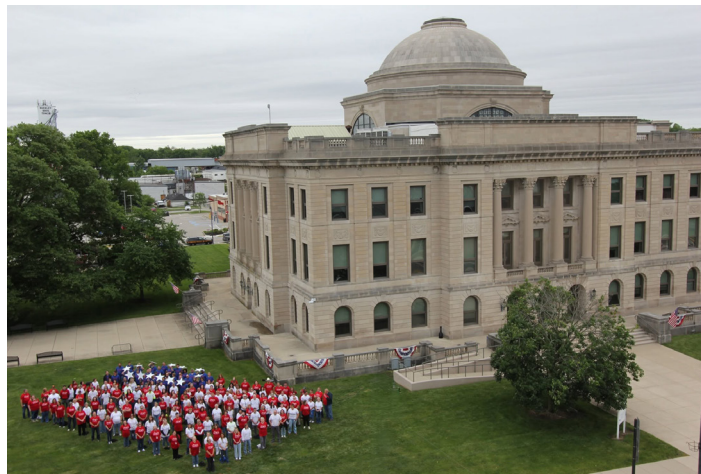
CCAO will continue to collect photos of county America 250 celebrations. If your county has courthouse or other America 250 celebration photos to share, please send them to comms@ccao.org.



The Coshocton County Courthouse.



The Belmont County Courthouse.



Clinton County officials outside the decorated Clinton County Courthouse.



The Darke County Courthouse.



The Fairfield County Courthouse.



The Harrison County Courthouse. Photo credit: John Jackson.



The Highland County Courthouse.



During the Preble County 4th of July parade, a band performs in front of the decorated courthouse.



The Monroe County Courthouse.



The Wayne County Courthouse.



The Ross County Courthouse decorated in celebration. Chillicothe was the first state capital of Ohio.



The Perry County Courthouse. Pictured: Executive Director of the America 250 Ohio Commission Todd Kleismit with the Perry County Commissioners.



The Licking County Courthouse.



The Miami County Courthouse.

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DARNITA BRADLEY
Director, Local Government Affairs & Engagement
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FEATURE Big Boy No. 4014 Visits Fostoria During America 250 Tour

Fostoria welcomed thousands of visitors on July 14 as Union Pacific's Big Boy No. 4014 stopped in Seneca County during its coast-to-coast tour commemorating America's 250th anniversary. Originally built in the 1940s, Big Boy is the world's largest operating steam locomotive and has become a symbol of the important role railroads played in the nation's history.

Seneca County Commissioners Brent Busdeker and Anthony Paradiso toured the locomotive during its stop, joined by CCAO Staffers Cheryl Subler and John Leutz, State Senator Bill Reineke, and other local and elected officials.

The visit was especially fitting for Fostoria, a community well known for its rail heritage and the "Iron Triangle," where three major rail lines intersect. The public display gave residents and rail enthusiasts alike an opportunity to see the restored locomotive and additional rail cars up close.



Commissioner Paradiso, Leutz, Subler, and Commissioner Busdeker.



Leutz with the map of Big Boy No. 4014's coast-to-coast tour.



The historic 1927 Pullman private passenger car Marco Polo, used extensively by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, joined Big Boy No. 4014 on its celebratory tour. Pictured above are Seneca County Commissioner Brent Busdeker, Senator Bill Reineke and Seneca County Commissioner Anthony Paradiso stand where President Roosevelt once addressed crowds during his famous whistle-stops.

FEATURE A New Life for Courthouse Flags: Logan County's Tribute to Veterans



Rachel Reedy

CCAO Outreach and Member Engagement Manager

The idea began with something many people would never notice.

Shortly after taking office as a Logan County Commissioner, Mike Yoder learned that the large American flag flying atop the Logan County Courthouse needed to be replaced every couple of months.

Rather than simply retiring each flag, Yoder saw an opportunity to create something meaningful.

"Why don't we take them down at the end of each month?" he suggested. "Why don't we do a presentation and give it to a deserving veteran of the community?"

That simple question became the foundation of Logan County's monthly ceremony honoring local veterans with a United States flag that has flown over the courthouse.

Since the program launched in early 2023, the Logan County Commissioners have recognized veterans from across the county in ceremonies attended by family, friends, elected officials and members of the community. Each veteran receives a carefully folded 5-by-8-foot American flag displayed in a presentation box, along with a certificate signed by the commissioners verifying that the flag flew over the Logan County Courthouse during a specific month.

From the beginning, county leaders wanted the recognition to remain focused solely on service. The Logan County Veterans Service Office identifies each month's recipient. Veterans voluntarily provide their military records, allowing organizers to share details about their military service, awards and personal history during the ceremony.

The event begins with the Pledge of Allegiance before the commissioners introduce the veteran, highlighting both military accomplishments and ties to the Logan County community. The commissioners then present the flag and thank the veteran for their service.

For Yoder, the recognition carries special meaning. As a young teenager at the end of the Vietnam War, he remembers seeing the way many returning service members were treated.

"I remember when those veterans came home," he said. "They were treated terribly, and it made a big impression on me."

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Now, decades later, he sees the program as an opportunity to offer veterans, particularly those who served in Vietnam, the respect they deserve.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

"We have not had anybody who was not totally thrilled with being honored in that way," he said.

The program has also become a favorite among local media outlets, which regularly cover the ceremonies and share recipients' stories with the community. Yoder noted that even



Logan County Commissioners Joe Antram, Mike Yoder and Greg Fitzpatrick present a courthouse flag to Army Veteran Ray Stamm.

online, where criticism often comes easily, the recognition program consistently receives praise.

The recognition program has also found a way to connect younger generations with local veterans. The county sets aside the flags flown during August, September and October. Rather than presenting those during the regular monthly recognition ceremonies, commissioners reserve them for Veterans Day. On November 11, each commissioner visits one of Logan County's three county public school districts to present a courthouse flag to a local veteran during the school Veterans Day programs.

The Veterans Service Commission, again, selects recipients

Continued on Page 21

GUEST COLUMN Why Multi-Factor Authentication Matters



Keith Faber

Auditor of State

Our office keeps seeing a recurring problem: An attacker steals one login, and that single account opens the door to much, much more. It doesn't take a high-level account to cause harm. Even a basic network account can give an attacker a way to gain further access to other accounts and sensitive information.

Multi-factor authentication, or MFA, is one of the best ways to stop this.

WHAT IS MFA?

MFA asks users to prove who they are in two or more ways before they log in. It usually combines:

- Password or PIN
- Authenticator app on your phone or a security token
- Face ID or fingerprint

Because it takes more than one proof, a stolen password alone is rarely enough to get in.

WHY PASSWORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Many organizations still rely on passwords alone. But passwords are stolen every day through phishing, malware, scams, and data breaches. Email is an especially weak spot. If someone takes over your email, they can reset the passwords for your other accounts. MFA adds a second lock.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Use MFA on every system. Turn it on for email, cloud apps, payroll, vendor portals, remote access, VPNs, and any internet-facing tool that holds sensitive data. This applies to everyone, with no exceptions. Executives, board members, and system administrators must use it too, since attackers often target users who have administrative privileges or control over finances.

Hold vendors to the same rule. Contractors, consultants, and service providers should meet the same MFA standard as your staff. Your security is only as strong as the weakest login connected to it.

Limit what the public can reach. Review which forms and functions are open on internet-facing portals. Sensitive items,

such as payroll change requests, direct deposit forms, and vendor banking updates, should not be reachable without strong login controls. Give each user access only to what their job requires.

Strengthen password resets. Many recent fraud cases started with weak account recovery. A reset should not depend on email access alone. Add extra checks, such as MFA, identity verification, and staff review for high-risk changes.

Watch high-risk changes. Put extra controls around changes to vendor bank details, payroll direct deposit, and user access. These should require a second person to verify and approve them.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Password-only security no longer protects the systems your organization depends on. Assume a password will be stolen at some point and build layers that keep one stolen login from becoming a larger breach or financial loss.

At a minimum, use MFA for all users and vendors, strengthen your password reset process, and review what you expose through internet-facing portals. These steps match trusted cybersecurity frameworks from NIST and CIS and can sharply cut the risk of payroll diversion, vendor payment fraud, and other cyber losses.

Please review your organization's current practices and update your policies as needed. If you have questions, contact your regional AOS office through the Contact Us page at ohioauditor.gov.

GUEST COLUMN Ohio State Fair is a Learning Experience for All



David Civittolo

Associate Dean and Director, Ohio State University Extension

The Ohio State Fair (July 29-August 9) is one of the oldest and most anticipated summer traditions in the Buckeye State. Each year, it attracts nearly one million visitors who come to celebrate Ohio's agricultural diversity, youth achievement, education and community. While many fairgoers come for the food and entertainment, the Ohio State Fair is also one of Ohio's largest learning environments, providing educational opportunities for visitors and exhibitors of all ages.

Ohio State University Extension plays an important role in these efforts, connecting fairgoers with research-based information and hands-on learning experiences during the 13-day event.

Exhibits and demonstrations provide valuable information on agriculture, food systems, environmental stewardship, nutrition and consumer sciences. Visitors can engage with experts who explain where food comes from, how agricultural products are produced, and the role agriculture plays in Ohio's economy and communities.

One example is the new Ohio Proud Kitchen, where Extension professionals will host educational programming focused on food preparation, nutrition and safe food handling. Visitors can learn practical skills for preparing healthy meals, discover Ohio-grown products and ingredients, and gain knowledge they can use at home. These experiences help connect consumers to Ohio agriculture while promoting healthy living.

Learning at the fair extends beyond exhibits and demonstrations in the Natural Resources Park, where Extension-trained volunteers engage visitors through hands-on education and conversation. Master Gardener Volunteers staff the Garden Help Desk, answering questions about gardening, lawn care, plant diseases and invasive species, while maintaining demonstration gardens that spark on-site learning. Also in the park, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists connect with fairgoers at attractions such as the Butterfly House and kayak area, sharing knowledge about butterflies and Ohio's natural resources.

While these opportunities benefit visitors of all ages, the fair also serves as a significant learning experience for thousands of Ohio youth who are enrolled in Ohio 4-H.

For some youth exhibitors, the Ohio State Fair represents



Thousands of Ohio youth from throughout the state participate in various learning opportunities at the Ohio State Fair—including project evaluation days.

the culmination of months of learning and personal growth. In 2025, youth from all 88 Ohio counties participated in the state fair by way of their involvement in Ohio 4-H, showcasing the skills and knowledge they developed through their project work.

Preparation for state fair evaluations begins long before opening day. For months, 4-H members work with local Extension professionals and volunteers on projects that align with their interests. Whether studying photography, natural resources, woodworking, STEM, nutrition, health, livestock management or dozens of other topics, youth gain valuable knowledge while building critical-thinking and leadership skills.

Participating in the Ohio State Fair allows youth to demonstrate what they have learned and often marks the pinnacle of their 4-H experience. During the fair, nearly 4,600 youth participate in special-interest project evaluations. Through interviews, presentations and project displays, they share what they have learned and demonstrate mastery of their chosen projects.

Learning opportunities extend beyond project evaluations.

More than 2,100 youth livestock exhibitors participate in the fair each year, showcasing skills developed through months of work in animal care and management. They learn about animal nutrition, health, recordkeeping and daily care responsibilities in preparation for entering the show ring.

Beyond livestock shows, nearly 1,700 youth compete in livestock skillathons and other judging events. These contests challenge participants to apply their knowledge of animal science, production practices and industry standards in practical, real-world situations.

The educational impact of these experiences extends beyond the fairgrounds. Through project work, evaluations and competitions, youth strengthen communication skills, self-confidence, decision-making abilities and subject-matter expertise. These experiences help prepare future leaders for careers in agriculture, science, education, business and many other fields.

None of these opportunities would be possible without dedicated volunteers and professionals who support Ohio 4-H. In 2025, more than 500 adult volunteers helped make the Ohio State Fair experience possible. Community volunteers, Extension professionals, educators, commodity organizations, industry representatives and business leaders contribute their time and expertise to provide learning opportunities.

The Ohio State Fair demonstrates that learning can happen anywhere. Whether youth present a project, compete in a skillathon, exhibit livestock or receive feedback from a judge, each experience provides an opportunity for growth. Likewise, fairgoers who visit educational exhibits, attend demonstrations or engage with agricultural experts gain a deeper understanding of the people, industries and resources that shape Ohio.

These learning opportunities reflect Ohio State University Extension's commitment to providing research-based education and meaningful experiences that strengthen individuals, families, communities and Ohio's agricultural future.

Continued from Page 18

with strong ties to each school community, giving students an opportunity to honor someone they often know personally. "When we get there, the students and everybody all know who that person is," Yoder said.

The school presentations have quickly become a meaningful extension of the original program, reinforcing the importance of service and sacrifice.

Although the program has primarily recognized veterans, the commissioners have made two memorable exceptions. On separate occasions, they presented courthouse flags to two lifelong Logan County residents celebrating their 100th birthdays, recognizing a century of county contributions.

Yoder appreciates that one practical challenge has grown into a tradition that strengthens the community month after month. What began as a conversation about replacing weather-worn flags has become a lasting symbol of gratitude. Each presentation preserves not only an American flag, but also the story of a veteran whose service deserves to be remembered. In Logan County, a flag that once flew high above the courthouse now serves as a personal reminder that a grateful community has not forgotten the men and women who answered the call to serve.

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GUEST COLUMN Rumpke Partners with Commissioners to Help Counties Meet Sustainability, Diversion and Economic Development Goals

by Rumpke Waste & Recycling

Rumpke Waste & Recycling is a family-owned company that has been around for nearly 100 years. That longevity, and the opportunity for a strong future, results from their commitment to keeping neighborhoods clean and green by delivering exceptional waste and recycling solutions for all involved.

From their modest beginning in 1932, Rumpke employs nearly 3,000 in Ohio and delivers on the promises they make to the people and the communities they serve throughout Ohio with a solid focus on [sustainability](#).

Simply put, Rumpke exists to protect the health and well-being of the public and the environment.

“If you’re not innovating, you’re not growing,” says Bill Rumpke, Jr., CEO, Rumpke Waste & Recycling. “Growth is one of our core values, and every year we research and put new technology into practice to provide our customers with dependable service solutions that make economic and environmental sense.”

Rumpke’s growth has allowed it to develop the needed processes, procedures, and specialized facilities throughout Ohio to move trash and recycling material effectively to where it needs to go, all while supporting the communities and local economies that they work in.

One critical element of the infrastructure Rumpke uses to move material efficiently is the transfer station.

A transfer station is a place where residential, commercial, and industrial garbage trucks drop off waste material to be consolidated into larger trailers for transport to central landfills or recycling facilities.

Because of transfer stations, fewer vehicle miles are traveled to transport materials to out-of-county destinations, reducing carbon footprint. It’s far more efficient to have transfer stations serve as mini hubs rather than having every Rumpke truck haul all the way to landfills and recycling facilities and back. Additionally, all the material is handled inside [an enclosed building with no outside storage](#) and no waste disposal at the site.

Rumpke owns or operates 10 transfer stations in Ohio.

Delaware County Commission President Jeff Benton said the recycling and transfer station in Delaware County helps the county meet its overall sustainability goals. “Delaware County has partnered with Rumpke for waste management services since 2020. Our working relationship reflects a strong, collaborative partnership built on trust and excellent service.



Clark County Commissioners toured Rumpke’s newest transfer station before it opened on July 1st. From left to right in front of the hauling offices at the Clark County Transfer Station: Rumpke District Manager Kevyn Vasquez; Rumpke Vice President Jake Rumpke; Clark County Commissioner Charles Patterson; Clark County Commission President Sasha Rittenhouse; Rumpke Operations Manager Michael Koopman; Clark County Commissioner Greg Kaffenbarger.

The Delaware County Transfer and Recycling Center enhances our ability to manage waste efficiently for our residents and businesses and reinforces Rumpke’s commitment to the area. The actual waste volumes far exceeded the planned ones, proving that the expanded service has been well received, and that the facility is in a great location.”

Sustainability means ensuring an environmentally and economically responsible solution for long-term disposal of solid waste for future generations. That includes the design and development of Rumpke’s transfer stations which was critically important to Clermont County Commission President David Painter.

“I’m particularly impressed by the engineering here,” Commissioner Painter said during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the Clermont County Transfer Depot.

“From the advanced fire suppression systems to the leachate containment designed to protect our local watershed, Rumpke has demonstrated that industrial growth and environmental stewardship can and must go hand-in-hand. Economically, this project is a powerhouse. It generates essential JEDD funding and property tax revenue that directly supports our schools and public safety. But as a scientist, what I most value is that it provides sustainable long-term solutions for two million customers Rumpke serves, ensuring our region remains clean

and viable for generations to come.”

Rumpke opened its newest transfer station in Clark County on July 1st. The Clark County Transfer Station brings both jobs and increased residential recycling drop off options particularly for residents in the western Clark County. The new facility features a 14,000 sq. ft. transfer station, a 7,000 sq. ft. maintenance garage, offices for sales and hauling operations teams and a residential recycling drop-off location. About 40 team members will work out of this location.

“We appreciate Rumpke’s \$16 million investment in Clark County to build the transfer station and the new jobs created in the related hauling operations,” Clark County Commission President Sasha Rittenhouse said. “This essential infrastructure is in line with our solid waste management plan and expands recycling opportunities and waste disposal solutions for our residents and businesses throughout the region.”



The Rumpke Delaware County Transfer Station.



The Rumpke Clermont County Transfer Depot.

THE FORWARD PATH





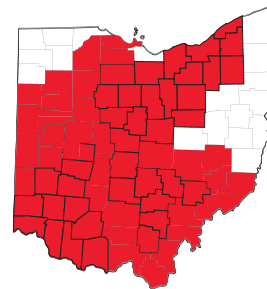
The year ahead may bring twists and turns for employers. But no matter what obstacles come, the right partner can help you remain steady on the path forward. Sedgwick supports Ohio clients and their employees by simplifying workers' compensation claims. We help mitigate risks, control costs, administer discount programs, share safety best practices, and provide expert program consultation. Taking care of people is at the heart of everything we do.

For additional questions, contact Tony Sharrock at:
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GUEST COLUMN County Boards of Developmental Disabilities: A Local Partnership That Changes Lives

by Jake Dowling, Legislative Affairs Manager, Ohio Association of County Boards

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Every day in Ohio, more than 117,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families rely on their local county board of developmental disabilities to help them live, learn, work, and thrive in their communities. From supporting infants with developmental delays to helping adults find employment, live independently, and age with dignity, county boards provide a lifetime of services that strengthen individuals, families, and local communities.

That system was born from a grassroots movement. Founded by families in 1967, county boards of developmental disabilities were created because no existing systems were able to meet the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. County boards provided alternatives to state-run institutions and created opportunities for people with I/DD to live, work, and participate in their communities.

Today, county boards provide a wide range of essential supports, including Early Intervention and early childhood programs, educational and family support services, support and service administration, employment training and job coaching, as well as supported living and residential services. Many of these services continue throughout a person's lifetime.

County boards have occupied a unique and historic role in Ohio for nearly six decades and remain deeply connected and accountable to the people, families, and communities they serve. More than half of governing board members are people with I/DD or family members, ensuring local accountability and governance informed by lived experience. Together, Ohio's county boards have built a one-of-a-kind, nationally recognized system that promotes dignity, independence, and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities throughout their lives.

FUNDING

County boards of DD are funded primarily through voter-approved property tax levies, meaning they rely on local resources to deliver services that meet the unique needs of their communities. Additional revenue comes from federal Medicaid reimbursement for case management and limited state operating budget support.

In addition to supporting local services, county boards are statutorily required to pay a portion of the state's share of Medicaid expenditures for services provided to people with I/DD. In State Fiscal Year 2026, local property tax dollars



Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Pictured left to right: Terri Rice, Dennis Roberts, Sara Steimle, Amber Gibbs (Superintendent), Alaina McCruel, Allison Frazier, Melanie Rak, Adam Herman (OACB, CEO), Rachel Sielski, Derek Topola, and Stephen Scheidt.

funded approximately 45% of the state's share of Medicaid waiver matching funds. As a result, changes to property tax policy have direct implications for Ohio's Medicaid financing and the services available to people with I/DD and their families.

These local tax dollars support both Medicaid-reimbursable services and essential locally funded programs that receive little or no Medicaid reimbursement, such as Early Intervention for babies and toddlers. At the same time, the amount local taxpayers contribute toward the state's Medicaid waiver match has grown significantly over the past several years.

THE FUTURE OF DD SERVICES

Today, a combination of increasing service demand, rising costs, and an unsustainable funding structure is placing significant pressure on Ohio's developmental disabilities system. For the first time, county boards collectively entered deficit spending in 2024.

This shift has largely been driven by state policy changes and necessary provider reimbursement increases that have significantly increased the local share of the state's Medicaid waiver match. While these investments have strengthened the provider network, they have also shifted a growing financial obligation onto local property taxpayers.

Ohio's current funding structure places unlimited state

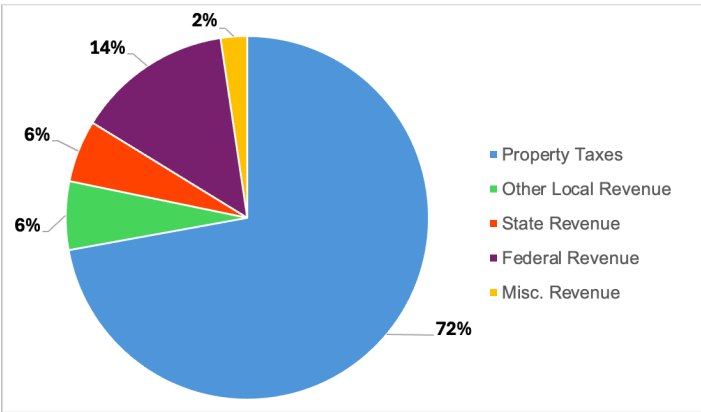


Bennett, a toddler who receives services from Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Medicaid cost growth on local property taxpayers. Without changes, county boards will increasingly need to seek additional property tax levies simply to meet their growing state Medicaid funding obligations rather than expand or improve local services.

A stronger state-local partnership is needed to ensure people with I/DD and their families continue receiving the services they need while protecting local taxpayers from unsustainable cost growth. County boards look forward to working with county commissioners on policy solutions that better align state and local funding responsibilities, improve system efficiency, and preserve the family-centered governance model that has made Ohio a national leader in developmental disabilities services for the past six decades.

COUNTY BOARDS OF DD FUNDING BREAKDOWN



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.



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GUEST COLUMN Empowering Your Next Financial Step

by Empower

Retirement planning can feel overwhelming. There are numbers to review, terms to understand, and decisions to make. The good news is that you do not need to be a financial expert to build a strong strategy.

With the right tools and guidance, you can make confident decisions about saving and investing for your future.

Start with your Ohio County Employees Retirement Plan (OCERP) website

One of your most important resources is your Ohio County Employees Retirement Plan (OCERP) website at ocerp457.com.

When you log in, you can:

- View your account balance and track your progress
- Update your contribution rate
- Review or change your investments
- Name or update your beneficiaries
- Explore retirement planning tools and calculators

Your personalized dashboard can help you see where you stand today and how changes, such as increasing your savings rate, could impact your future retirement income. Taking a few minutes to review your account can help you stay on track.

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Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

IMPORTANT: The projections or other information generated on the website by the investment analysis tool regarding the likelihood of various investment outcomes are hypothetical in nature, do not reflect actual investment results, and are not guarantees of future results. The results may vary with each use and over time.

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VOICE OF COUNTY LEADER

Lenny Eliason, Athens County Commissioner and CCAO Board Member

How long have you been a county commissioner?

28 years.

Can you tell us about yourself?

I spent 25 years in broadcasting including 10 years as an owner of radio stations. I was a Domino's Pizza Area Franchisee before that and built the first Domino's stores in Cuyahoga County.

Why did you want to be a commissioner?

I was President of the Chamber of Commerce and every time we wanted to do economic development the chamber was asked "What do the county commissioners support?" So, I knew I needed a seat at the table if I wanted to make my county a better place to live, work and play.

What are you most proud of for having achieved in your time as commissioner?

Helping found CEBCO. Becoming Ohio's second President of NACo; the first was over 50 years ago. Being honored by my fellow commissioners with a building named after me.



"Team Lenny" during Commissioner Eliason's run for NACo 2nd Vice President at the NACo Annual Conference in 2009.



Commissioner Eliason receiving his Decades of Dedication award marking his 20+ years of service and presidencies of CCAO and CEBCO with Henry County Commissioner (then-CCAO President) Glenn Miller.

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced as a county commissioner?

Balancing the budget while continuing to provide and improve services to our county.

What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?

How different people's motivations and reasons for running for office are and how to work with them.

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?

The legislature taking money away and expecting us to do more with less. For example, the housing of the 4th and 5th degree felons was a state responsibility, and they shifted it to the county.

What do you see as the most pressing opportunities and challenges facing county government today?

Being engaged in the community in the face of polarization and lack of critical thinking.



Commissioner Eliason and his wife, Lisa, with the "Little Lenny" cutout made during his NACo 2nd VP run.

You were an integral part of the creation of CEBCO. Can you talk about that experience?

It was a two-year journey but we had a model in CORSA, we just had to change some laws, get some money and take a leap of faith. It has worked out far beyond my expectations.

Could you discuss your involvement with CCAO and your experience as an active member?

I have made a lot of close friends on both sides of the aisle and from all sizes of counties. Being involved in CCAO has given me back much more than I put into it. It taught me a lot. The average service length for a commissioner is around one and a half terms. I will have completed seven plus terms. I couldn't have done it without my involvement in both CCAO and NACo.



CEBCO recognized Commissioner Eliason at the 2026 Annual Meeting for his service to CEBCO. Eliason served on the CEBCO Board for 20-plus years, including 5 years as Board President.



Commissioner Eliason speaks as NACo President.



In 2025, the Athens County Records Center was dedicated in Commissioner Eliason's name. Pictured L-R: Athens County Commissioner Charlie Adkins, CCAO Staffer John Leutz, Eliason, CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, Athens County Commissioner Chris Chmiel.

Commissioner Eliason will retire at the end of 2026 after 29 years of service as an Athens County Commissioner. During his time as a commissioner, he served as CCAO President, CEBCO President, NACo President, a CCAO board member and a CEBCO board member, among many other roles. We will miss you, Lenny, and wish you the best in this next chapter!

CORSA NEWS

Weather Preparedness Starts Now: Tips from CORSA's Newest Risk Control Consultant



Aaron Shirley

CORSA Risk Control Consultant

It may be hard to think about snow, ice, and freezing temperatures while enjoying the summer months, but now is the ideal time to prepare your property for winter. Taking a proactive approach before cold weather arrives gives facility managers the opportunity to address maintenance issues, protect critical building systems, and reduce the likelihood of costly property damage and business interruptions. Winter-related losses, particularly those involving frozen pipes, water damage, roof leaks, and heating system failures, are among the most common and expensive claims, yet many can be prevented with proper planning and routine maintenance. By investing a little time in preparation today, counties can better protect their property when temperatures begin to fall.

WINTER READINESS CHECKLIST

Protect Against Frozen & Burst Pipes

- Insulate exposed pipes in attics, crawl spaces, exterior walls, and other unheated areas.
- Seal cracks, gaps, and openings that allow cold air to reach plumbing.
- Maintain indoor temperatures at 55°F or higher, even in vacant buildings.
- Test freeze protection devices, freeze alarms, and shut-off valves before winter.
- During extreme cold, allow vulnerable faucets to drip slowly to relieve pressure and reduce the risk of bursting pipes.

Prepare Heating & HVAC Systems

- Schedule a professional HVAC inspection before the heating season.
- Replace air filters and inspect equipment for worn or damaged components.
- Check ventilation systems to ensure safe operation and proper airflow.

Improve Building Envelope Protection

- Inspect insulation for damage, gaps, or areas of heat loss.
- Weatherproof doors, windows, and utility penetrations.

- Keep cabinet doors open during cold spells to allow warm air to circulate around plumbing.

Inspect Roofs & Exterior Components

- Check roofs for loose shingles, damaged flashing, and potential leak points before snow and ice arrive.
- Disconnect and store outdoor hoses and drain exterior water lines where possible.
- Inspect roof drains and gutters to ensure proper drainage and remove debris that could contribute to ice dams or water intrusion.
- Remove dead or damaged tree limbs that could fall during winter storms.
- Trim branches over buildings, walkways, and parking areas to reduce the risk of property damage and injury from snow or ice.
- Inspect trees near power lines and coordinate trimming as needed to help prevent service interruptions during severe winter weather.

Have an Emergency Response Plan

- Know the location of the main water shut-off valve.
- Establish procedures for frozen pipes, water damage, and other winter emergencies.
- Maintain contact information for restoration contractors and emergency service providers.

Risk Management Takeaway

Most winter property losses are preventable. Routine inspections, pipe protection, proper heating, building maintenance, and emergency preparedness can significantly reduce the likelihood and severity of costly winter claims. [Weather Preparedness Matters. Watch and Get Ready.](#)

Save the Date - CORSA Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars! The CORSA Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 18th. The meeting will provide an opportunity to connect with fellow members, receive program updates, and discuss important issues impacting Ohio counties. Additional details and registration information will be distributed soon.



Kevin Williams

Managing Director, Health and Wellness

As CEBCO's new Managing Director, I am honored to join an organization that has become one of the most successful public-sector health benefits pools in our region.

After service to both county (Delaware) and municipal governments over the past 35+ years, I am grateful for the opportunity to help guide CEBCO into its next chapter. My connection to CEBCO goes back to its beginnings as a member of the CCAO feasibility team that helped establish CEBCO. I later served on CEBCO's Board of Directors when Delaware County became one of the first five members. CEBCO's growth to 49 member counties over the past 22 years brings realization of the objectives of that feasibility team.

Under the direction of our Board of Directors, I am committed to identifying and implementing innovative, practical strategies that will maintain exceptional service, effectively manage claims costs, and provide member counties with the most attractive and sustainable employee benefits programs to fit their needs.

I look forward to working with you as we build upon CEBCO's strong foundation and continue delivering value to our member counties. If you need to contact me, don't hesitate to reach out to me at kwilliams@ccao.org.

CEBCO BOARD RETREAT

The CEBCO Board of Directors met at the end of May 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); Treasurer – Steve Hess (Champaign County); and Secretary – Jeff Benton (Delaware County).

The board approved the medical/Rx trend to be used in calculating the 2027 county renewals as well as the minimum/maximum increase percentages and approved a vendor proposal to make enhancements to the CEBCO website.

The directors were provided education around their fiduciary

responsibilities as board members, and our actuarial consultant, Aon, provided education about the renewal process and the factors that go into calculating county rates.

CEBCO EXPANSION

Effective 8/1/2026, Highland County became the 49th Ohio county to join CEBCO for their medical and pharmacy benefits. CEBCO covers over 16,500 employees with approximately 37,000+ members. CEBCO remains Anthem's largest employer group in the state of Ohio.

WELLNESS TOPICS

Wellness topics that are being emphasized this summer include: Sun Safety, Child Immunizations, Healthy Aging and Longevity, and Caregiver Stress and Burnout. Please use the following links to learn more about these topics to help improve your and your family's overall health:

[Sun Safety Tips: Your Future Self Will Thank You | Anthem](#)

[Protecting your child with vaccines](#)

[Live Well, Age Well: Tips for a Healthier Tomorrow | Anthem](#)

[Managing the Stress of Caregiving: How to Prevent Burnout | Anthem](#)



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SERVICE CORPORATION NEWS

The Rising Cost of Emergency Medical Transport: County Benefits+ Expands to Offer MASA



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
SERVICE CORPORATION



Steve Caraway

Managing Director of Enterprise and Retirement Services

Across Ohio and the nation, county leaders continue to face challenges that extend beyond balancing budgets and delivering public services. One growing concern is the rising cost of emergency medical transportation. Whether by ground or air ambulance, these services are becoming more expensive, less predictable and increasingly affected by broader changes in the healthcare system.

For Ohio counties, this trend directly impacts employee financial security, workforce well-being and the ability to recruit and retain talented public servants.

Emergency medical transportation costs have increased significantly over the past decade, driven by inflation, hospital closures, longer transport distances, more complex patient care and changing insurance reimbursement structures. Even without an increase in utilization, the cost of ambulance transportation has risen 32 percent. At the same time, employees may face varying levels of out-of-pocket expenses depending on their health plan and whether emergency transportation providers are considered in or out of network.

The challenge is even greater in many rural communities where hospital and emergency department closures have increased the distance emergency responders must travel. Longer transports often result in higher costs, creating additional financial exposure for employees during what is already a stressful emergency.

Studies also show that concerns about ambulance costs can influence healthcare decisions. According to a recent YouGov survey, one in four Americans reported they would hesitate to call an ambulance during a medical emergency because they feared the cost. Delaying emergency care can lead to worse health outcomes while creating additional financial and emotional stress for employees and their families.

Recognizing these challenges, the County Commissioners Association of Ohio is pleased to announce that MASA® (Medical Access & Service Advantage) is now available through County Benefits+.

County Benefits+ is CCAO's premier supplemental employee benefits program, offered exclusively to Ohio counties through a partnership with Aflac and supported by NACO's Public Promise Insurance program. Designed specifically for county governments, County Benefits+ provides a comprehensive portfolio of voluntary benefits that help counties attract and retain employees while offering valuable financial protection for their workforce.

As healthcare costs continue to rise, supplemental benefits play an increasingly important role by helping employees manage unexpected expenses that traditional medical coverage may not fully address. The addition of MASA further strengthens the County Benefits+ portfolio by providing protection from out-of-pocket costs associated with emergency medical transportation—both ground and air—regardless of network status.

By expanding County Benefits+, CCAO continues its commitment to

providing Ohio counties with innovative benefit solutions that meet the evolving needs of county employees and their families.

For more information about MASA or County Benefits+, please contact:

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Regional Sales Executive, Public Sector, MASA
etoole@masamts.com

Steve Caraway

Managing Director of Enterprise & Retirement Services
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
scaraway@ccao.org

masa+



Attention Ohio County
Employee Benefits Administrators

Don't overlook this protection

Get MASA® emergency transport
protection through CCAO

Emergency air and ground ambulance services can leave employees facing unexpected out-of-pocket costs—even when they're insured. MASA emergency transport protection is designed to complement existing health plans by helping address eligible costs related to emergency medical transportation—without disrupting primary plan structure.

CCAO RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION NEWS

4th Annual County Classic Raises Support for Future Public Service Leaders



Tim Hoverman

Managing Director of IT/Operations



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio's 4th Annual County Classic Golf Outing was another tremendous success, bringing together county officials, partners, and supporters from across the state for a day of fellowship, friendly competition, and a shared commitment to Ohio's future.

Held at Glenross Golf Club in Delaware County, the annual outing benefits the CCAO Research & Educational Foundation Scholarship Program, which helps students pursuing careers in public service. Thanks to the continued generosity of participants and sponsors, the tournament remains one of the Foundation's signature fundraising events.

Over the past four years, proceeds from the County Classic have helped fund \$40,000 in scholarships awarded to 20 students representing 17 Ohio counties. These scholarships support students who have demonstrated a commitment to public service and who aspire to make a difference in their communities and throughout Ohio.

CCAO extends its sincere appreciation to this year's generous sponsors for helping make the outing possible: Isaac Wiles Burkholder & Miller, County Firm, Empower, Wessler Engineering, Willis Advantage Property Solutions, Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, and DLZ. Their partnership and commitment to Ohio's counties continue to make a lasting impact through the Foundation's scholarship program.

Congratulations to the 2026 County Classic Champions: Kyle Petty, Dillon Overman, Jordan Glick, and Joe Gruber, whose outstanding play earned top honors in this year's tournament.

CCAO also extends its thanks to every golfer, volunteer, and supporter who participated in this year's outing. Your continued support helps invest in the next generation of public servants and ensures the [CCAO Research & Educational Foundation](#) can continue opening doors for deserving students across Ohio.



CCAO President and Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus welcomes attendees as CCAO's Tim Hoverman looks on.



Delaware County Commissioners Jeff Benton and Gary Merrell along with Ottawa County Commissioner Mark Stahl and Tim Hoverman.





The Wessler Engineering team showed up in full force!



Winners of the 2026 County Classic: Kyle Petty, Dillon Overman, Jordan Glick and Joe Gruber.



From left to right: Hannah McKinley from Empower, Commissioner Driehaus, Heather Smith from Empower and CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler.



Joe Sokel with County Firm prepares to eat lunch.



Team Perry County was joined by Perry County Commissioners Chase Bennett and Ben Carpenter.



Commissioners Scott Lirot from Williams County and David Painter from Clermont County have a discussion before the golf outing.



CCAO LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Denise Driehaus, Hamilton County Commissioner
1st Vice President	Casey Kozlowski, Ashtabula County Commissioner
2nd Vice President	Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive
Treasurer	Joe Antram, Logan County Commissioner
Secretary	Pete Gerken, Lucas County Commissioner
Member	Shannon Jones, Warren County Commissioner
Member	Glenn Miller, Henry County Commissioner
Immediate Past President	David Painter, Clermont County Commissioner

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Donnie Willis	Jackson County Commissioner



CORSA LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Director	Harry Brady, Huron County Commissioner
Director	Jim Justice, Ashland County Commissioner
Director	Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner
Director	Gary Scherer, Pickaway County Commissioner
Director	Dave Wilson, Guernsey County Commissioner



CEBCO LEADERSHIP

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Vice President	Harry Brady, Huron County Commissioner
Treasurer	Steven Hess, Champaign County Commissioner
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Member	David Painter, Clermont County Commissioner
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Member	Bartley Westfall, Williams County Commissioner

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Vice Chair: Bill Pursel, Knox County Commissioner

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Co-Vice Chair: Aaron Flatter, Darke County Commissioner
Co-Vice Chair: Glenn Miller, Henry 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 us at comms@ccao.org or 614-221-5627.