



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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CCAO urges members to come to Columbus to advocate for county priorities on March 30

Next Thursday, March 30, CCAO President and Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller will be testifying on CCAO's behalf in front of the full House Finance committee. We encourage all of our members to come to Columbus on March 30 for an Advocacy Day. You can provide testimony to the Finance committee and give your county's perspective and meet with your legislators to stress the importance of our priorities.

Budget amendments must be submitted by April 5, so it is imperative that we make a final push to ensure that CCAO priorities like Local Government Fund restoration, indigent defense reimbursement, county jail funding, and Next Generation 9-1-1 operating funds are included in the House version of the budget.

More information on CCAO's planned Advocacy Day will be distributed on Monday.

Senate passes Transportation Budget with wider force account discretion; House does not concur, setting up conference committee

On Wednesday, the Senate Transportation Committee reported [House Bill 23](#), the state transportation budget, after its 9th hearing. Before passing the bill out of committee, [an omnibus amendment](#) was adopted into the bill. The bill was passed by the Senate 30-0 on Thursday, with the House refusing to agree to the Senate amendments by a vote of 16-79 the same day. A conference committee regarding the bill will likely convene next week.

[The key change included of interest](#) to counties in the Senate-Passed version is another revision to the force account issue. As a reminder, the House-Passed version of the bill removed force accounts and replaced them with scope of work provisions, which would have allowed county engineers to perform some projects based on certain characteristics of the project, with others required to be performed by private contractors. The County Engineers Association of Ohio had expressed concerns with this system, particularly as it related to culverts.

The Senate removed the scope-of-work provisions and replaced them with more flexible monetary force account language. The Senate-Passed version of the bill authorizes boards of county commissioners (as well as governing authorities of townships and municipalities) to establish their own force account limits via a resolution. Similar to current law, separate limits will apply to road projects and bridge and culvert projects. A county must report their established limits to the Auditor of State and can alter their limits at any time through a new resolution, although the new limits will not take effect until the changes are reported to the Auditor of State.

If a county does not set its own force account limits, it uses amounts set in statute: \$75,840 per mile for road projects and \$252,800 for bridge and culvert projects. Each July, these figures would be adjusted to accommodate increases in the National Highway Construction Cost Index tracked by the US Department of Transportation. For comparison, the current force account limits are \$30,000 per mile for road projects and \$100,000 for bridge and culvert projects.

Members with questions should contact Jon Honeck at jhoneck@ccao.org or 614-220-7982.

CCAO President Glenn Miller testifies in support of increased Next Generation 9-1-1 funding

On Tuesday, CCAO President and Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller testified in support of [Senate Bill 50](#) (Senator Steve Wilson and Senator Kent Smith), a bill regarding 9-1-1 services, at the Senate Financial Institutions and Technology Committee hearing.

The bill includes a universal service fee (USF) which will apply to landlines, wireless devices, and voice over internet protocol systems to support ongoing operating of the Next Generation 9-1-1 system. The USF would be set at \$0.70 per device, allowing up to \$70 million annually for distribution to county 9-1-1 systems.

[President Miller informed the committee](#) that the \$0.70 user fee is the recommendation of the Statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network Steering Committee (ESINet Committee) and is the culmination of more than a decade of work by the ESINet Committee. The funding would help counties operate Next Gen 9-1-1 which has superior location services than existing 9-1-1 services by using GPS coordinates instead of phone signal triangulation, along with many other technological improvements.

House Bill 33, the main operating budget, includes funding for the rollout of Next Gen 9-1-1; the USF in Senate Bill 50 funds day-to-day operations. CCAO is working with partners in the legislature to get the user fee amended into the operating budget.

You can view President Miller's testimony on the [Senate Financial Institutions and Technology Committee archive](#), beginning at the 05:00 mark.

Defiance County Commissioner Kern, CCAO Policy Director Petty testify regarding Association budget priorities

This week, CCAO Board of Directors Member and Defiance County Commissioner David Kern and CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty each testified on behalf of the Association regarding provisions in [House Bill 33, the state operating budget](#), relating to health and human services and public safety, respectively.

Defiance County Commissioner David Kern [testified](#) on the human services provisions in the budget before the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. His testimony highlighted CCAO priorities including increased funding for children services, family and children first councils, adult protective services, public assistance administration, and child care.

Commissioner Kern's testimony also highlighted the association's support for the proposed Healthy Aging Grants to help seniors age in place. The grants would flow through the county commissioners who would have flexibility to choose local partners to help address gaps and provide a range of services, from minor home improvements, to transportation, to personal care. Representative Jim Hoops asked Commissioner Kern about the local partnerships that commissioners might use to do the work in the community. Commissioner Kern discussed relationships commissioners already have with partners including the county job and family services agency, area agency on aging, local community action agency, and others.

You can view Commissioner Kern's testimony on the Ohio Channel archive of the [Health and Human Services Subcommittee](#), beginning at the 03:02:00 mark.

Meanwhile, also on Wednesday, CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty testified on Association priorities in front of the House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety. During his testimony, he informed the committee about the need for increased funding for indigent defense reimbursement to accommodate the workforce issues that have driven up the fees that counties must pay attorneys.

He also discussed with the committee the need for county jail funding, the Association's support for the NG 9-1-1 system rollout while noting support for an increased user fee (see prior article) and expressed CCAO's support for the funding included in the budget to fully pay monthly subscription fees for the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System, more commonly known as MARCS.

You can view Petty's testimony on the Ohio Channel archive of the [Public Safety Subcommittee](#), beginning at the 01:16 mark.

Counties are the Association's best spokespeople for our priorities, and one of the strongest messages you can send is passing resolutions in support of provisions in the budget. This week, the [Hardin County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution](#) stressing the importance of indigent defense funding and thanking Governor Mike DeWine for continuing the partnership with counties through the effort to fully fund reimbursement. If you would like to adopt a similar resolution, please contact Nick Ciolli at nciolli@ccao.org or 614-220-7978.

If you have questions about the human services items included in the proposed budget, please contact Rachel Massoud Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org or 614-220-7996; questions regarding public safety items can be directed to Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org or 614-220-7977.

First round of Appalachian Community Grants awarded, next window to open in November

This week, the DeWine-Husted Administration announced the first round of Appalachian Community Grant Program awards, totaling \$50 million of the \$500 million program.

The \$50 million will go to four projects:

- **The Utica Shale Academy of Ohio** will receive \$2.35 million to create the Connecting Communities Through Workforce Training project, providing residents of Columbiana, Carroll, Jefferson, and Mahoning counties with career pathways.
- **The city of Athens** will receive \$17.7 million to revitalize more than 80,000 square feet of downtown space in the city and in Coshocton, Logan, and Somerset. Additionally, the funding will provide collaborative regional programming for the expansion of mental health services in Athens, Coshocton, Hocking, and Perry counties.
- **The Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program** will receive \$25.8 million to address social determinants of health in Athens, Glouster, Nelsonville, Gallipolis, and Middleport. This includes mental health drop-in centers, the production of affordable housing, renovation of downtown buildings, and more. It will benefit Athens, Gallia, and Meigs counties.
- **The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia** will receive \$4.18 million for tourism efforts related to nature, heritage, and art. These efforts will include connectivity to workforce development and expanded health care access. The project will benefit Athens, Meigs, and Jackson counties.

In addition to the four projects listed above, \$7.66 million of technical assistance grants will be provided to [21 organizations](#).

You can read more about the first round of awards under the [Appalachian Community Grant Program here](#). The application window for the second round is expected to open in November.

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

Several bills of interest to counties received hearings this week across different committees.

Senate Finance

- [Senate Bill 35](#) (Senator Frank Hoagland and Senator Sandra O'Brien): To create the Law Enforcement Assistance Fund to reimburse for specified costs of peace officer and trooper continuing professional training, to create the Law Enforcement Equipment Fund to provide

grants to small local law enforcement agencies to be used for purchasing law enforcement equipment, and to make an appropriation.

- Second hearing; proponent testimony from the Fayette County Sheriff, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Ohio Municipal League.

House Ways and Means

- [House Bill 57](#) (Representative Thomas West and Representative Steve Demetriou): To index the homestead exemption amounts to inflation.
 - Second hearing; proponent testimony from the County Auditors Association of Ohio, the Ohio Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center.
- [House Bill 60](#) (Representative Dan Troy): To increase the amount of and expand the income qualifications for the homestead exemption.
 - Second hearing; proponent testimony from the Franklin County Auditor, the Ohio Poverty Law Center, and the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging.
- [House Bill 1](#) (Representative Adam Mathews): To modify the law regarding property taxation and income tax rates.
 - Fourth hearing; interested party testimony from the Willoughby-Eastlake City School Board and opponent testimony from Orange Village Councilman Judson Kline.

House Economic & Workforce Development

- [House Bill 3](#) (Representative Gail Pavliga and Representative Lauren McNally): To formally state the General Assembly's intention to authorize an affordable housing tax credit.
 - Third hearing; proponent testimony from multiple witnesses, including the Ohio Business Roundtable, the Ohio Society of the American Institute of Architects, and AARP Ohio, among others.

House Government Oversight

- [House Bill 21](#) (Representative Dan Troy): To require a presidential primary election to be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May.
 - Second hearing; proponent testimony from the director of the Tuscarawas County Board of Elections and member of the legislative committee of the Ohio Association of Election Officials.

Bill Introductions

The following bills that may be of interest to counties were introduced:

- [Senate Bill 87](#) (Senator Kent Smith): To establish the day of each general election as a legal holiday for which government employees receive paid leave.
- [Senate Bill 91](#) (Senator Tim Schaffer): Regarding fraud, waste, and abuse of public funds.
- [Senate Bill 92](#) (Senator Rob McColley and Theresa Gavarone): To allow a special election to be held in August for certain purposes and to make an appropriation.