November 14, 2022

The Clermont County Board of Elections building aglow in green as part of Operation Green Light, honoring the United States' veterans.

If you are having issues viewing Counties Current in your email, click [View this email in your browser] at the top of the email.

Association and Member News | State and Federal News | Education and Grants | ARPA and BIF Resources | County News | Did You Know? | Job Postings

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Print Version | Dates to Remember

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

Back to Top

Governor authorizes State Disaster Relief for 22 counties hit by severe storms

Last week, Governor Mike DeWine authorized the use of the State Disaster Relief Program to help counties impacted by severe storms earlier in the year.

The following counties impacted by flooding that occurred on February 17 and February 18 may qualify for assistance:

- Gallia County
- Harrison County
- Jefferson County

The following counties impacted by severe storms that occurred from May 6 to May 8 may qualify for assistance:

- Monroe County
- Muskingum County

The following counties impacted by the derecho that occurred from June 13 to June 17 may qualify for assistance:

- Ashland County
- Coshocton County
- Guernsey County
- Hocking County
- Holmes County
- Jackson County
- Knox County
- Logan County
- Meigs County
- Monroe County
- Morrow County
- Noble County
- Richland County
- Tuscarawas County
- Vinton County
- Washington County
- Wayne County

The following county impacted by tornadoes on July 6 may qualify for assistance:

- Clermont County

The SDRP is a reimbursement program that can be used in instances where storm damage amounts do not meet the threshold for federal assistance. The program is intended to provide supplemental state assistance to local governments and eligible non-profit organizations for costs associated with debris removal, emergency protective measures, and permanent work.

Call for Letters of Interest to NACo board of directors representative positions

As part of the upcoming CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference, CCAO will be electing two members to the National Association of Counties (NACo) board of directors, per NACo bylaws.

We ask that individuals interested in running for these two positions submit a 1-2-page letter of interest to Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org by 12:00 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 30th. CCAO will distribute these letters to Ohio NACo members on Monday, December 5th.

On Thursday, Dec. 8th during the annual meeting, CCAO will conduct an election for these two positions. This vote will be by paper ballot. Each NACo county will receive two votes, and the top two vote-getters will be the new representatives to the NACo board of directors. The elected board members would begin their terms in July 2023. This election will not impact any other NACo board positions Ohio members may hold, such as those receiving board appointments from the NACo president or due to previous service as NACo president.

Should there be a two-way tie for first place, both individuals will receive board seats. If there is a three-way tie for first place, there will be a runoff election. If there is a tie for second place, there will be a runoff election. If a tie remains after two elections, a coin toss will be conducted to determine the winner.

If you have any questions about the election process, please contact Cheryl Subler or Robin Garrett.

Unofficial November 8th election results

CCAO has compiled the unofficial results of county commissioner, county executive, and county council member elections that were held yesterday, as well as the results of county wide tax issues and CCAO Service Corporation issues.

As a note, these results are not official, and some may change between when the lists were made and when the official results are certified. To check more up-to-date information regarding any election, please check the applicable county's board of elections website.

November 8th General Election: CCAO Member Races, Unofficial Results

November 8th General Election: County, CCAO Ballot Issues, Unofficial Results

Registration open for the 2022 CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference

Registration is now open for this year's CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference, held December 7 to 9. The theme for this year's conference is Innovation and Inspiration to Shape Ohio's Future.

You can view the current draft of the schedule here! Please keep in mind that some sessions may change between now and the timeslot.

Additionally, 170 tickets to the Columbus Blue Jackets game on December 7 at 7:30 p.m. are available for free courtesy of MS Consulting. Tickets to the game against the Buffalo Sabres are available on a first come, first serve basis. **As of this writing, roughly 50 tickets remain.**

More information about the conference and links to register and reserve hotel rooms are available on the CCAO website.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

NACo launches Housing Task Force; Boyce to co-chair

On November 10, NACo announced the creation of the NACo Housing Task Force to bring county government officials from across the nation together to illuminate the most critical housing challenges and opportunities from the county government perspective.

The Task Force is co-chaired by Franklin County Commissioner Kevin Boyce, along with Commissioner Sherry Maupin of Valley County, Idaho.

The Task Force wil work to develop detailed analyses regarding the challenges communities face regarding housing. The Task Force will present its final analysis at the NACo Annual Conference in July 2023.

You can read more about the Task Force at its NACo webpage.

Bureau of Workers Compensation makes reclassification of certain public employees

The BWC has issued guidance on a new manual classification for public employers effective 1/1/2023 – ***Public Employer Clerical & Clerical Telecommuter Employees***. The premium rate for this classification of employees is significantly lower than the general rate for county employees: the 2023 rate will be $0.15 per $100 payroll compared to $0.71 for other county employees. Classifying employees in the new manual could represent a significant premium savings for counties.

This BWC bulletin provides specific direction and the requirements for the new manual classification.

Ohio Auditor of State Performance Audits

The Ohio Auditor of State has a performance audit service available to counties, schools, and other local governments. Performance audits are voluntary audits to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and functions with the goal of making them better. AOS performance audits require the participation of the organization being audited.

Common performance audit areas include program results/operations, staffing, compensation, contract management, and facility, fleet, and asset use. Performance audits adhere to government auditing standards. Cost for an audit varies based on depth and breadth of work performed.

For more information, please consult the AOS website and this PowerPoint description.

Ohio Department of Medicaid releases COVID-19 Unwinding Toolkit

During the federal public health emergency (PHE) put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, states have been prohibited from disenrolling Medicaid members. The PHE is set to expire on January 11, 2023, and the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) **does not** anticipate that it will be renewed.

The Department has published a COVID-19 Unwinding Partner Toolkit for helping to guide members on important steps they can take now to be ready for the return to eligibility renewals. The partner packet is available in six languages and includes items such as flyers, social media templates and newsletter content. ODM encourages everyone to use this info and the formatting, so the message is consistent and the materials recognizable.

New NACo initiative to focus on coal communities

Recently, NACo launched a new initiative called Building Resilient Economics in Coal Communities (BRECC). BRECC will be a multi-faceted initiative with three main prongs: the National Network, the Coalition, and Challenge cohorts.

The BRECC National Network is an open forum and peer network that connects coal community leaders representing governments, regional organizations, non-profits, businesses, education providers, and more. You can register for the National Network and receive updates on BRECC programming here.

The Coalition is a network of local leaders dedicated to advancing economic development and community revitalization. An information session regarding the Coalition will be held on November 29 at 2:00 p.m.

There will be two Challenge cohorts, each of which will receive support over a 12-month period to develop and implement an action plan for diversifying area economies. The Challenge will prioritize applicants representing under-resourced communities. The information session on November 29 will cover the Challenge cohorts as well.

You can read more about BRECC here.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

Back to Top

Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

Ohio Grants Summit registration open

On November 30 and December 1, the Ohio Office of Budget and Management will host the 2022 Ohio Grants Summit, an online, free event intended to help local governments and non-profits which apply for funding from the State of Ohio.

The event runs from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. both days and each day features four sessions.

The Day One sessions will discuss emerging issues in federal funding, preparing for audits, a discussion regarding American Rescue Plan Act funds, and water and wastewater funding in the recent federal infrastructure bill.

The Day Two sessions will discuss "Buy America" provisions of grant opportunities, how to best prepare competitive grant applications, how to leverage census data when preparing an application, and information sessions with executive agencies.

Registration for the event is free but the number of slots is limited. Registration is separate for each day and can be completed through the links above. If you are unable to register in time, the event will be livestreamed on The Ohio Channel.

Application window for $50 million in jail project funding is open

The Department of Rehabilitation & Correction (DRC) has opened the application window for $50 million in jail project funding that was included in the most recent capital appropriations bill.

Applications will be evaluated through a process similar to that used for projects funded under the prior capital budget, with one notable change. The question regarding cost per bed will no longer be a "scored question" but it will still be considered for projects intending to expand a jail's housing capacity.

The application can be found here, as well as the announcement letter and an OBM guide on allowable capital expenditures.

CCAO recommends that all counties apply for funds through the program. Even if you consider it unlikely your county will receive funding through the program, applying shows the Dewine-Husted Administration the overwhelming need for jail funding and will help the Association lobby for more funding in the future.

In addition to the $50 million discussed above, there is a total of $575,000 available for designated jails identified in HB 687. A funding guide will be sent directly to these recipients from DRC.

The application deadline for the $50 million pool is November 30, 2022.

NOTE: the application PDF states that the deadline is October 30, 2022. This is an error; the deadline is November 30.

If you have any questions about the grant program or would like to discuss issues with your county jail that may not be covered by these funds, please contact Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org or 614-220-7977.

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

Back to Top

This section of Counties Current will be a permanent fixture for the foreseeable future to help counties with the ins and outs of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These two laws provide a once-in-a-generation investment.

Resources for ARPA Reporting and Compliance

The most recent version of the US Treasury Reporting Guidance was published September 20, 2022. Counties and other local governments with populations greater than 250,000 or ARPA distributions greater than $10 million are required to file Project and Expenditure Reports no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter throughout the grant period. Other recipients will file Project and Expenditure Reports annually by April 30.

Members are urged to consult resources from US Treasury, NACo, and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management for more information about reporting and how to use ARPA funds. CCAO maintains a list of ARPA links and resources, including a comparison of state and federal procurement laws, at the ARPA Resources page.

Ohio Ethics Commission issues statement regarding stimulus funds

Last week the Ohio Ethics Commission released a statement ensuring that public officials are aware that stimulus funds, such as those received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the funds that communities will receive under Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian investment program, are public funds and that conflict of interest laws must be observed.

To that effect, the Commission also recirculated its Advisory Opinion No. 2009-006, issued in 2009 regarding stimulus funds made available to governments under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It provides a more in-depth examination of potential conflicts of interest with stimulus funds, including a discussing regarding vendors.

CCAO encourages members refamiliarize themselves with this Advisory Opinion and conflict of interest laws to ensure good stewardship of ARPA and Appalachia funds.

Guidance and overview of available BIL funding available from NACo and the Ohio Department of Transportation

NACo and ODOT each host a resource page providing information to counties about the Bipartican Infrastructure Law. The pages are rich with information including multiple tables providing overviews and links to funding opportunities, a timeline of upcoming grant programs, and much more.

The NACo website can be found here and the ODOT website can be found here.

CCAO strongly encourages counties to frequently visit the sites and apply for funding through the myriad of programs to bring valuable federal funds to Ohio communities.

COUNTY NEWS

Back to Top

Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One county from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted.

Northwest District

It's time to restore local government funds

Sidney Daily News, November 4, 2022

Good news has been a frequent occurrence in Shelby County lately. We have major industry projects announced with SEMCORP and Honda, we have new housing developing in many county communities, and Sidney's downtown has seen an expansion of many businesses. All of these examples are signs of positive growth. However, challenges still face our county.

Our workforce participation rate is only 23,176 persons (Aug. 22) down from 28,000 persons in 2006 with many jobs going unfilled. Many people (especially women) are left out of the workforce as we do not have available childcare. Drug abuse and neglected children continue to be a challenge for our mental health providers and social service agencies.

Yet, while we struggle to address these issues Shelby County provides many essential services to the residents with road and bridge infrastructure, with safety services including emergency dispatch, and with human services such as public assistance programs and mental health and addiction services. We all realize these services come at a cost.

Northeast District

Commissioners hire attorney for annexation fight

Tribune Chronicle, November 10, 2022

Trumbull County commissioners voted Wednesday to ask the common pleas court to appoint attorney Robert Burkey of Warren as the county's legal representation during the proposed annexation of more than 31 acres from Howland and Vienna townships into the city of Niles.

Howland on Wednesday also appointed an attorney, Alfred E. Schrader of the legal firm Roderick Linton Belfance LLP of Akron to represent Howland and Vienna townships. Legal fees will be evenly split between the townships.

A public hearing on the annexation is set for 11:30 a.m. Dec. 7 in the commissioners' hearing room on the fifth floor of the county administration building.

Central District

Richland County commissioners reviewing 2023 budget proposals

Mansfield News Journal, November 9, 2022

The Richland County commissioners saw no major surprises Tuesday as they continued to work to put together a general fund budget for 2023.

The board spent the morning reviewing budget proposals for the Wastewater Department, Veterans Services, County Recorder and Richland County Probate Court.

Wastewater Director Amanda Miller's proposed 2023 budget of $3,760,000 is just 1.7% over her spending proposal at this time last year. The major line item increase was 3% hike in the salary like item, which reflects the current negotiations with employee unions.

Southwest District

Butler County still has to jump through hoops to get federal rent assistance

Journal News, November 11, 2022

The U.S. Treasury finally sent another batch of rental assistance money to Butler County but the $2 million they forwarded is half what they promised and now they have also reduced support to grant recipients.

The county was awarded $20.4 million in rent and utility assistance money from the federal government but funds have been tardy, promises broken and now the U.S. Treasury has notified recipients they are no longer accepting phone calls. The county received $11.4 million — which came in a lump sum — first and a second allocation of $9 million that has been coming in problematic batches, the first one was $3.6 million.

The Journal-News obtained emails the Treasury sent to the county's development department that show the county was promised a $4 million allotment — $5.4 million was the remaining balance until Treasury clawed some back —would be forthcoming on Sept. 30, but five days later the amount had been halved, with no explanation. They sent $2 million on Oct. 27.

Southeast District

Commissioners talk WASCO building project

The Marietta Times, November 11, 2022

Washington County Commissioners will prepare a Request for Proposals for architect bids that could help planners assess the best ways to prepare the vacant WASCO building off Muskingum Drive for a Countywide 911 center and additional uses.

Commission President Charlie Schilling said at Thursday's commission meeting that the county can provide up to $25,000 to get construction estimates on adapting the building to state-specified requirements for 911 operations, along with possible other uses that can co-exist in a separate part of the building, which has 20,000 square feet of space.

In general, a 911 operation is estimated to need about 5,000 square feet.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Back to Top

NOVEMBER 18, 2022
CCAO BOARD MEETING

DECEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 9, 2022
CCAO-CEAO WINTER CONFERENCE (Register here)

DID YOU KNOW?

Back to Top

Franklin County

Columbus native Eddie Rickenbacker was the United States' "ace of aces" in World War One. The unofficial title refers to the pilot with the most aerial victories for a combatant; Rickenbacker had 26 to his name when the war ended on November 11, 1918.

Rickenbacker received the Distinguished Service Cross eight times, recieved the Medal of Honor, and was awarded the Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre by the French government for his actions in the war.

In his autobiography, Rickenbacker recorded that when he heard of the signing of the Armistice to end the war, he got in his plane and flew above No Man's Land (as the territory between opposing trenches was called).

"I was the only audience for the greatest show ever presented. On both sides of no man's land, the trenches erupted. Brown-uniformed men poured out of the American trenches, gray-green uniforms out of the German. From my observer's seat overhead, I watched them throw their helmets in the air, discard their guns, wave their hands."

You can read more about Rickenbacker's life at the National Park Service's entry about his childhood home, a national landmark.

Below: Rickenbacker in uniform shortly after the war's conclusion. Photo courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

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