December 12, 2022

Congratulations to the CCAO Board of Directors Officers who were elected during Winter Conference! From left to right, 2nd Vice President David Painter (Clermont County), 1st Vice President Chris Abbuhl (Tuscarawas County), President Glenn Miller (Henry County), Treasurer Denise Driehaus (Hamilton County), and Secretary Casey Kozlowski (Ashtabula County).

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Winter Conference Recap: Board of Directors and NACo Representatives

The 2022 CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference concluded on Friday, and it was another successful event! The associations welcomed more than 500 visitors from across the state, including commissioners, county council members, county executives, county engineers, staff from across county departments, and vendor partners.

During the CCAO's Annual Business Meeting the CCAO membership voted on officers, board members, and NACo representation. For board officers, the membership unanimously accepted the recommendations of the CCAO Nominating Committee:

- President: Glenn Miller of Henry County
- 1st Vice President: Chris Abbuhl of Tuscarawas County
- 2nd Vice President: David Painter of Clermont County
- Secretary: Casey Kozlowski of Ashtabula County
- Treasurer: Denise Driehaus of Hamilton County

During the Banquet on Thursday evening, the new officers for CCAO and CEAO were sworn in by Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives Bob Cupp, himself a former Allen County Commissioner.

Additionally, the following members were appointed to two-year terms on the board:

- Ron Amstutz of Wayne County
- Mollie Crooks of Muskingum County
- Bryan Davis of Scioto County
- Pete Gerken of Lucas County
- Christopher Modranski of Carroll County
- John O'Grady of Franklin County
- Ilene Shapiro of Summit County

During the Business Meeting, those counties that are members of NACo also voted for Ohio's two representatives on the NACo Board of Directors. In a three-way race between Julie Ehemann (Shelby County), Debbie Lieberman (Montgomery County), and Painter, NACo members selected Lieberman and Painter for the NACo Board.

Winter Conference Recap: Governor, First Lady, and Senate President address conference

During the luncheon on Thursday afternoon, attendees received addresses from Governor Mike DeWine, First Lady Fran DeWine, and Senate President Matt Huffman.

Governor DeWine highlighted his local government experience as Greene County Prosecutor and touted successes over his first term, such as the increase in the gas tax and increased funding in the areas of indigent defense, county jail construction, and children services. He also alluded to the upcoming executive budget introduction by saying that counties "will be happy" with what he proposes for future indigent defense and children services investments.

First Lady DeWine spoke about her Imagination Library initiative in partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. During the course of Governor DeWine's first term, every county is now participating in Imagination Library and more than 50% of children age 0-5 in the state are registered with the program.

Senate President Huffman discussed the need for good stewardship of taxpayer funds and reiterated his support for force account reform. While acknowledging that the reform efforts did not get across the finish line during the past transportation budget, President Huffman made it clear that the Senate will act on the issue next year.

Winter Conference Recap: Panels Galore!

Across the three-day conference, attendees had the opportunity to sit in on a number of panels to learn about issues affecting counties today. Sessions included such topics as:

- Mitigating poverty in one's community,
- The Stepping Up program,
- Advice on making appointments to boards and commissions,
- A cyber security overview from CORSA,
- An overview of the county board of revision,
- and more!

Weren't able to attend, or simply missed a session because it conflicted with another you wanted to sit in on? No fear! CCAO will have all materials from the conference, organized by session, hosted on the Winter Conference page of our website within the next week. Keep an eye out!

Butler County START program receives national recognition

Brown County's Sobriety Treatment and Reducing Trauma (START) program became the first certified START program in the county this week. The Ohio START program began as a pilot in southern Ohio in 2017, when Governor Mike DeWine was serving as Attorney General. It launched out of the Attorney General's office and has now expanded to 54 counties.

The START program aims at helping parents achieve recovery, improve their parental capacity, and keep children in their parental home when it is safe and possible. The Ohio program is administered by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio and receives funding from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services.

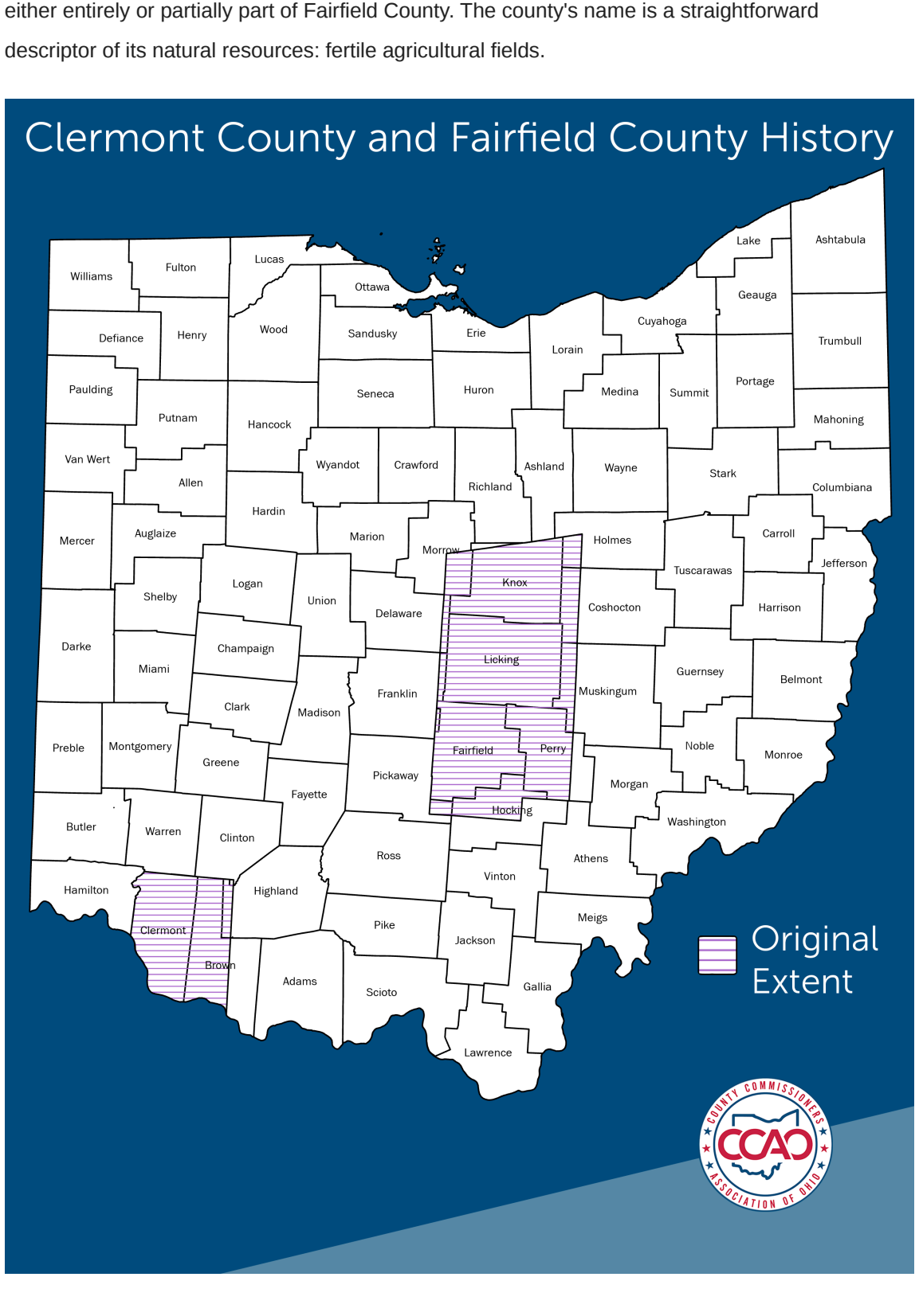
Congratulations Brown County!

Happy birthday to Clermont County and Fairfield County!

Two counties celebrated their 222nd birthdays this week. Clermont County blew out its candles on December 6th while Fairfield County took its turn on the 9th. Both were founded in 1800, meaning they are two of Ohio's nine pre-statehood counties.

Clermont County originally included about half of Brown County and a portion of Highland County. Much of the original area had been reserved as compensation for Virginia veterans. At least three parcels of land were owned by George Washington, but it is unknown if he ever visited them. The county's name is French for "clear mountain," a name it shares with a region in France.

Like the other pre-statehood counties, Fairfield County was also originally much larger than it finds itself today. The nearby counties of Hocking, Knox, Licking, Pickaway, and Perry used to be either entirely or partially part of Fairfield County. The county's name is a straightforward descriptor of its natural resources: fertile agricultural fields.



Winter Conference Recap: Thank you to our sponsors!

This year's Winter Conference would not have been possible without our sponsors. Thanks again for your support!

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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ODJFS and OJFSDA release information on benefit card skimming, urge awareness of other local officials

Article provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association.

According to the Federal Food and Nutrition Service, Ohio is among a number of states being targeted by criminals stealing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, through a process called "skimming". Please read the attached awareness document on this important issue as hundreds of Ohio SNAP recipients have fallen victim to the scam.

What is happening?
According to the Federal Food and Nutrition Service, Ohio is among a number of states being targeted by criminals stealing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This is known as skimming. In skimming, criminals use a device placed over a point-of-sale card reader that steals information from payment cards like SNAP EBT and cash assistance cards. This means SNAP or cash assistance benefits could be stolen without you knowing.

What steps should I take to help stop this?
You do NOT need to ask for a new card. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services suggests these steps for anyone using a SNAP or cash assistance card.

- Take the time now to change the personal identification number (PIN) for your EBT or cash cards.
- Change your PIN monthly, before each scheduled benefit deposit.
- You may want to change your PIN after making an online purchase using an EBT or cash card and PIN.
- Never share the EBT or cash card number or PIN if asked for through an email, text message, or over the phone.
- Carefully look at any card reader before using your card: Skimming devices can be placed over the card reader. Check if a reader sticks out or doesn't seem secure.
- When using your card, cover the keypad with your body or hand to stop someone from seeing your PIN. Scammers sometimes try to get your PIN by watching from a distance.

How do I change my PIN?
You can change your PIN by logging into your online account at https://www.connectebt.com/ for SNAP or https://www.eppicard.com/ for cash cards. You can also call 1-866-386-3071 for SNAP or 1-866-320-8822 for cash cards and follow the prompts to change your PIN.

What do I do if I think my benefits were stolen?
If you believe your benefits were stolen, change the EBT or cash PIN number right away. Then ask for a new EBT or cash card by calling 1-866-386-3071 for SNAP or 1-866-320-8822 for cash cards. Notify your local County Department of Job and Family Services and file a theft report with your local law enforcement agency. Contact information for your local JFS may be found at https://jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio Businesses Play an Important Role in Combatting Unemployment Fraud

Article provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Ohio, like the rest of the nation, dealt with unprecedented levels of unemployment claims—and unemployment fraud—over the course of the pandemic. This fraud impacted claimants and employers alike.

To date, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has recovered nearly $400 million in fraudulently obtained benefits. But the sad reality is that we now live in a world where criminals see unemployment as an ongoing target.

It's possible some individuals are only finding out now that their identity was compromised. Each year after Oct. 15 (the last tax-filing date for those who requested extensions), the IRS reconciles the information we send them with submitted tax forms. They may contact individuals who appear to have received benefits that they didn't report – when in fact these individuals were the victims of identity theft. If this happens, and the benefits were paid from Ohio, we are encouraging individuals to file reports at our online fraud portal at unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/IdentityTheft. That way, we can conduct an investigation and, if necessary, issue a corrected 1099-G form to the IRS.

To combat attempts to steal unemployment benefits, ODJFS has dramatically changed the way it addresses fraud. Cyber-defense efforts include a suite of anti-fraud measures, such as multi-factor authentication and enhanced ID-proofing. These steps have dramatically decreased fraudulent claim attempts.

Ohio businesses also have a role in combating unemployment fraud. Please respond timely to any correspondence you receive from ODJFS—particularly any "Request for Separation Information" notices you may receive. Responding timely to these notices, and writing "fraud/identity theft" on them, helps ODJFS more quickly investigate the claims and take appropriate action.

The most expedient way for employers to respond to "Request for Separation Information" forms is through their online accounts or by using the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) portal or SIDES E-Response, which is designed for employers and third-party administrators with fewer unemployment claims.

You can learn more about both SIDES and SIDES E-Response at https://jfs.ohio.gov/ouio/SIDES.stm or by watching this short video: https://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/tutorials/OUIO/SIDES/SIDES.mp4.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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

CCAO hosting webinar on drainage and road use agreements for renewable energy projects

On December 14 at 9:30 a.m., CCAO will host a webinar put on by Auglaize County Engineer Andrew Baumer and Auglaize County Administrator Erica Preston regarding the county's approach to renewable energy projects. Particular focus will given to the negotiation of DRUMAs (Drainage and Road Use Maintenance Agreements) with the developer of the energy project.

With the passage of Senate Bill 52, county government has the opportunity to become involved in the siting of utility-scale wind and solar projects. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure proper maintenance and repair of roads and ditches near the project site both during and after construction. This webinar will be of interest to counties that have seen interest among wind and solar energy developers increase in recent years.

Registration can be completed through the link above or here.

Law enforcement grants near due dates

Two law enforcement grants available through the state of Ohio are nearing their application due dates.

The due date for the first is **this Friday**. The Law Enforcement Recruitment Fund aims to assist law enforcement agencies with increasing the pool of qualified candidates. It is open to any law enforcement agency that is in compliance with data reporting standards and will fund up to two recruits to the Peace Officer Training Academy. As stated earlier, the due date for applications is **this Friday, December 16th**.

The second is the Ohio Drug Law Enforcement Fund Grant, aimed at defraying the expenses that a drug task force incurs through its functions. The grant is available to law enforcement agencies, including joint drug task forces. There is a local match requirement of at least 25% of the task force's projected operating costs during the grant period. The application due date is January 5th, 2023.

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

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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

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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

Lucas County board approves balanced, $175.9M budget for 2023

Toledo Blade, December 6, 2022
The Lucas County commissioners approved without public discussion a balanced, $175.9 million 2023 budget for the county Tuesday.

"The first thing that stands on the 2023 budget, we anticipate not to take any money out of our funding reserves. And that's probably the first time I've seen that. Ever," Commissioner Pete Gerken said.

While each of the three commissioners made a statement before unanimously approving the budget, no debate occurred.

Deputy county administrator Jessica Ford, who introduced the budget resolution, said the budget "represents a continued investment in workforce technology and critical infrastructure to ensure we provide essential services for residents, businesses, and visitors."

Northeast District

Commissioners briefed on erosion issues | Local News | starbeacon.com

Star Beacon, December 7, 2022
Ashtabula County Emergency Management Agency Director Mike Fitchet spoke with the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners on erosion issues in North Kingsville and Ashtabula Township.

Last week, the Ohio Department of Transportation closed a section of Route 531 at the border of North Kingsville and Ashtabula Township due to erosion encroaching on the roadway.

At Tuesday's meeting, Fitchet said North Kingsville Mayor Mindy Bisbee declared an emergency at a Monday night meeting because of the issue.

The village has been working with ODOT and the state for about three years regarding that stretch of road, Fitchet said.

"ODOT has taken responsibility for this," he said.

Central District

Marion Co. Commissioners pass Green Camp Twp. solar, wind restrictions

Marion Star, December 5, 2022
Six townships in Marion County have now instituted restrictions on the development of solar and wind energy projects.

On Thursday, the Marion County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution to restrict solar and wind farm development in Green Camp Township. The Green Camp Township Trustees' resolution designates all unincorporated areas of the township as a "restricted area prohibiting the construction of an 'economically significant wind farm,' 'a large wind farm,' or a 'large solar facility,' as defined by the Ohio Revised Code.

Per Section 4 of Ohio Senate Bill 52, which went into effect on Oct. 11, 2021, the restrictions "shall not apply to any application for a certificate, or material amendment to an existing certificate, from the (Ohio) power siting board."

The county commissioners voted 3-0 to approve the resolution. Green Camp joins Big Island, Claridon, Pleasant, Richland, and Salt Rock as townships that have voted to restrict solar and wind farm development.

Southwest District

Butler County commissioners won't unilaterally make massive space re-utilization decisions

Journal-News, December 7, 2022
The Butler County commissioners questioned some of the recommendations in a recent space reutilization study and assured other office holders and employees decisions won't be made unilaterally.

The commissioners hired CBRE, Inc. for $145,000 last summer to do the study, as they endeavor to right-size county government and enhance customer service for the taxpayers they serve. Mary Dungan with CBRE gave a presentation via Zoom on Monday that was barely audible — except to the commissioners who had her on their computer screens — but the three commissioners' dissatisfaction with the plan came across loud and clear.

"I'm not sure how realistic this recommendation is, I was looking for something that was more definitive and doable," Commissioner Don Dixon said. "I understand the categories I just don't understand the timing and how you'd pay for it and all these moving parts."

Commissioner T. C. Rogers told the Journal-News the study didn't give much guidance and "it came off pretty general and didn't seem to have any new ideas."

Southeast District

Commissioners approve letters of support to veterans hospital

Marietta Times, December 8, 2022
Letters of support for the Chillicothe Veterans Hospital and the Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center were approved by Washington County Commissioners on Wednesday.

The letters were part of the weekly agenda for commissioners, who moved up the regularly scheduled Thursday morning session to Wednesday so they could attend the County Commissioners Association of Ohio meeting Wednesday through Friday in Columbus.

The Chillicothe VA Hospital letter of support was initiated by Washington County Commissioner James Booth and Meigs County Commissioner Shannon Miller. The two Army veterans are concerned about reduction and elimination of some of the hospital's services, as well as federal government consideration of closing the facility completely, farming out certain services to other Ohio VA hospitals, and eventually replacing Chillicothe with an acute care outpatient facility.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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DECEMBER 14
WEBINAR: Implementing Drainage and Road Use Maintenance Agreements for Renewable Energy Projects (Register here)

DECEMBER 31
NEW YEARS EVE!

DID YOU KNOW?

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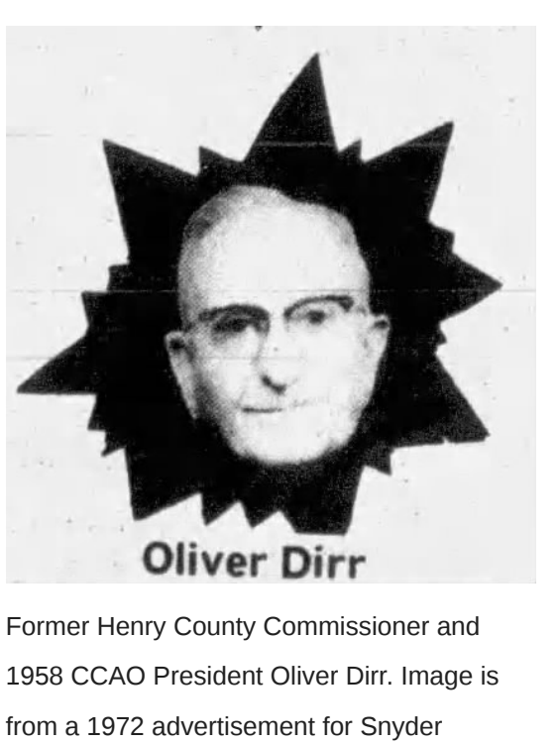
Henry County

With Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller's election as the next CCAO President, Henry County has now had two CCAO Presidents!* Oliver Dirr of Henry County served as president in 1958. The 65 year gap between Henry County's first and second CCAO president is the second longest that CCAO records can currently attest to, behind only Union County's 112 year gap between Commissioner Cyrus Zimmerman in 1901 and Commissioner Gary Lee in 2012.

**CCAO records have accounted for the Association president for every year back to 1939 and then back to 1901 with a few scattered missing years.*



Former Henry County Commissioner and 1958 CCAO President Oliver Dirr. Image is from a 1972 advertisement for Snyder Chevrolet-Olds Inc., a car dealership in Napoleon that Dirr worked at after his commissioner career.

Current Henry County Commissioner and 2023 CCAO President Glenn Miller

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