January 30, 2023

CEBCO held its first board meeting of the year last week and now officially serves more than half of Ohio's counties! Coshocton, Hancock, and Pickaway counties joined CEBCO on January 1 and Hocking County will join July 1.

CEBCO continues its mission to provide Ohio counties with stable and competitive rates, financial strength, and broad coverage that includes an array of health management, wellness, and lifestyle management services. It provides Medical and Prescription coverage to over 14,000 employees and nearly 31,500 members.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Warren County Commissioner Shannon Jones named chair of NACo's Policy Steering Committee on Human Services & Education

Last week, NACo President Denise Winfrey appointed Warren County Commissioner and CCAO Board member Shannon Jones to serve as the chair of NACo's Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee for 2023.

The steering committee reviews and makes recommendations regarding public policy issues and legislation regarding human services and education. NACo's steering committees are instrumental in forming the American County Platform, NACo's official policy document.

Commissioner Jones has a long history of public service, particularly with a focus on human services. She is in her second term as Warren County Commissioner, had previously served a decade in the Ohio General Assembly, and has served on several boards, committees, and commissions at the local, state, and national levels. She is also the President and CEO of Groundwork Ohio, a statewide nonprofit organization advancing quality early childhood care and education.

Congratulations Commissioner Jones!

Final round of Ohio Building Demolition grants announced

On Friday, the DeWine-Husted Administration announced the locations of more blighted and vacant structures that will be demolished with support from the Ohio Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program, created in the 2021 biennium budget.

The program, which has now been completely allocated, will help fund 3,699 demolition projects. This will open thousands of acres up for redevelopment across the state.

Among the demolition projects announced last week is the complete demolishment of the Rubber Bowl in Summit County. Originally a Works Progress Administration project in 1940, the stadium served as the home of the University of Akron Zips from 1940 to 2008. The stadium is already partially demolished but portions still remain due to the disruption to local traffic removal would cause. It is expected that the demolition funded through the state program will include the portions previously left standing.

CCAO thanks the DeWine-Husted Administration for its partnership with local governments to help remove stagnant buildings and to help revitalize Ohio communities. We look forward to continuing this partnership as the administration enters its second term.

Above: A view of the remaining portion of the Rubber Bowl, which funds from the latest round of Demolition and Site Revitalization grants will help remove.

CCAO Survey: County broadband projects

CCAO is conducting a brief survey of county-led broadband projects to provide information to BroadbandOhio regarding counties that have, currently are, or will be pursuing broadband projects.

As a result of numerous conversations with BroadbandOhio and other broadband groups, CCAO would like to gather some information about broadband projects in Ohio's counties. The results of this survey will be shared with BroadbandOhio to enhance their understanding of the broadband landscape in Ohio's counties. The information will assist CCAO with our advocacy work surrounding broadband and hopefully lead to increased opportunities for technical and financial assistance moving forward.

You can access the survey here. Please respond to the survey by February 3rd.

Thank you for your help!

Save the Date! New Member Training to be held February 27 - March 1

New Member Training is coming February 27, 28 and March 1 at the DoubleTree in Columbus! All members, new and experienced, are encouraged and invited to attend.

Early-bird registration pricing is available until February 19! Register by February 19 for the full training at a price of $250 and for single-day (any of the three days are eligible for single-day registration) for $150. After February 19 these prices will increase to $300 and $200, respectively.

You can reserve rooms at the DoubleTree for a reduced price through the CCAO's event portal, accessible here. Reduced rates are only available until February 13.

Registration can be completed here or through the link on the event page on CCAO's website.

A draft agenda for the training has also been released. Please note that time slots and sessions are subject to change.

We hope to see you in Columbus for the event! If you have questions, please contact Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org.

CCAO updates two employee relations chapters of the Commissioners Handbook

CCAO has published two updated County Commissioner Handbook chapters!

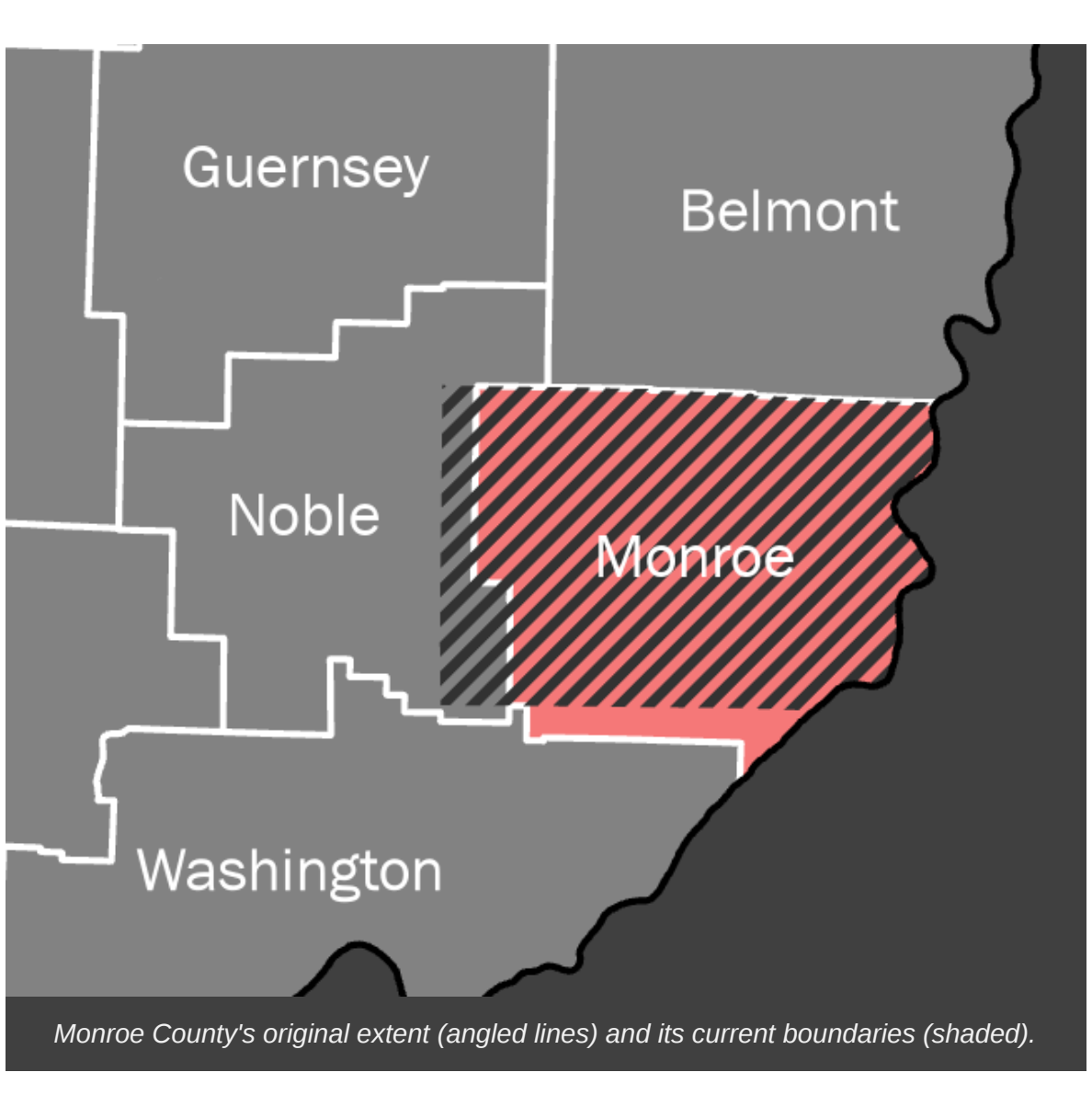
Chapter 63: Civil Service and Employment Issues and Chapter 65: Collective Bargaining were both updated with assistance from Marc Fishel of Fishel Downey Albrecht & Riepenhoff LLP. These chapters were last updated in 2011 and 2013, respectively.

An update of Chapter 66: Employee Benefits is still going through the review process and will likely be posted on the CCAO website sometime this week.

Happy birthday Monroe County!

Monroe County was formed on January 28, 1813, making this its 210th birthday!

The county was created out of land from Belmont, Guernsey, and Washington counties. It underwent a few minor adjustments until the creation of Noble County in 1853 set Monroe at its current borders. Its namesake is James Monroe, the Secretary of State at the time of the county's creation (he would be elected the country's fifth President four years later).



Monroe County's original extent (angled lines) and its current boundaries (shaded).

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Federal legislation increases ARPA flexibility for infrastructure, disaster response, and CDBG projects

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 was signed into law on December 29, 2022. The legislation contains important updates to how counties and other local governments may use their ARPA funds. First, the Act codifies the standard allowance included in the US Department of the Treasury's Final Rule that permits counties to use up to $10 million for the provision of government services under the "revenue loss" eligibility category without having to demonstrate losses through a complicated formula. This codification means that the Treasury Department cannot alter the standard allowance in any subsequent rulemaking.

The Act also permits counties to use the greater of $10 million or 30 percent of their total ARPA allocation for federal infrastructure projects, responding to natural disasters, or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects. Counties must expend these funds no later than September 30, 2026, rather than the standard date of December 31, 2026. Eligible natural disaster responses include emergency relief and the negative economic impacts of natural disasters, including temporary emergency housing, food assistance, financial assistance for lost wages, or other immediate needs. CDBG projects must meet the requirements of Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Some of the federal infrastructure programs eligible for ARPA match include the National Highway Performance Program; Bridge Investment Program; Surface Transportation Block Grant Program; and, the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program. More information, and a complete list of eligible transportation programs, is available from NACo at this link.

Ohio Department of Health launches survey to support State Health Assessment and State Health Plan updates

The Ohio Department of Health has released a survey to gather information and provide insights regarding health-related priorities, strengths, challenges, and emerging trends that will help inform the next iteration on the State Health Assessment and the State Health Plan.

The current State Health Plan can be viewed here while the survey can be completed here. We encourage counties to complete the surbey and provide the state your opinion.

Maternal and infant health program launched by Medicaid

Last Monday, the state officially launched Comprehensive Maternal Care, a community-based, statewide program aimed at improving the health and well-being of mothers, infants, and families covered by Medicaid.

To participate, obstetrical practices are required to measure and engage with patients and families through advisory councils or other means to hear firsthand accounts of how access to care, cultural competence, and communication methods affect patient outcomes. Practices must use patient input to improve the patient experience and reduce disparities. They also must consider and link patients to resources that address broader factors of health, such as housing, food instability, and transportation. Additional criteria for participation include:

- Using the Pregnancy Risk Assessment to quickly identify women in need of a first prenatal appointment and ensure timely access appointments and services needed.
- Engaging community supports and evaluating the mother's and family's experiences throughout treatment.
- Ensuring patient involvement and care continuity with their providers.
- Formally assessing practice strengths and patient needs annually to ensure resources, and best practices available are employed and achieving healthier outcomes

Ohio Medicaid estimates investing $5 million in CMC by the end of its first year, reaching over 14,000 pregnant and postpartum patients and enrolling 77 medical practices that are currently caring for pregnant and postpartum patients.

Ohio Power Siting Board proposes rule modifications

As part of its mandatory five-year rule review process, the Ohio Power Siting Board is proposing to add a new provision for minimum setbacks for solar facility applications. The proposed language for Ohio Administrative Code Section 4906-4-09(G) states the following:

The facility design is to incorporate a minimum setback from the project's solar modules of (i) at least 50 feet from non-participating parcel boundaries not containing a residence, (ii) at least 300 feet from non-participating residences existing as of the application filing date, and (iii) at least 150 feet from the edge of pavement of any state, county, or township road within or adjacent to the project area, unless otherwise agreed to by an authorized government representative with authority over a state, county, or township road or a waiver is granted.

Interested parties may comment on the rule change by emailing their remarks to Docketing@puco.ohio.gov no later than Monday, January 30, 2023. More information on the rules process is available at https://opsb.ohio.gov/rules/opsb-rule-review.

SNAP emergency allotment to end in February

On January 5, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services sent a letter to county JFS directors regarding the end of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) emergency allotments. You can read the full letter here. A summary is provided below.

As part of the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states were allowed to request emergency allotments for households participating in SNAP. These allotments would end either at the conclusion of the federal public health emergency or until the state ended the program. Ohio has been providing the emergency allotments since March 2020.

Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, states are no longer permitted to issue emergency allotments after February 2023, meaning households receiving SNAP benefits will receive only their normal allotments.

In many cases this will cause a dramatic decrease in the SNAP allotment individuals and households will receive. For example, the minimum allotment for an individual under SNAP is $23 per month. During the period of emergency allotments, such an individual has been receiving an additional $258 per month, for a total of $281 per month. Beginning in March, this individual will receive only the original $25, an approximately 91% decrease.

For those households on SNAP, particularly those who had not been receiving SNAP before the pandemic, the cessation of emergency allotments will have a substantial effect on their monthly budgets.

This will be a difficult time for residents of your counties and for your job and family services staff. We encourage our members to read the letter attached above and begin coordinating with the applicable county departments to help inform your community about the impending change to minimize the surprise that this may have on Ohioans.

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.

Federal grants available to modernize transit fleets

The Federal Transit Administration announced that $1.7 billion is available to support state and local efforts to buy or modernize buses, improve bus facilities, and support workforce development.

More than $1.2 billion is available under the Low or No Emission Program, which provides funding for governments to purchase or lease zero-emission or low-emission transit buses, along with required support facilities. The remaining $470 million is available under the Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities Competitive Program.

The FTA will be hosting two informational webinars in February regarding the programs. The first will be a general session on February 16 and the second will focus on rural and tribal applications on February 28.

The application window closes on April 13, 2023. You can find more information on the FTA's website.

SAM.gov, federal grant portal, walkthrough available

Last month, the US General Services Administration hosted an online forum to help walk state and local officials through how to use SAM.gov. The website is the primary portal for intergovernmental assistance from the federal government to state and local governments.

The Administration has made the presentation slide deck and the recording of the session available for download, as well as a one-page guide.

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

Commissioners approve West Jennings Creek cleanup project

Times Bulletin, January 18, 2023

West Jennings Creek winds its way through parts of Van Wert, Allen, and Putnam counties and when it rains a bunch…it floods.

A joint board of county commissioners from all three counties were asked to consider a land-owners petition to have the creek, just west of Delphos, cleaned out.

In a public hearing on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. Interested parties could comment on the proposal and express their support or opposition to the project which is estimated at $1.4 million.

"Jennings, to my knowledge, has never been petitioned before," said Kyle Wendel, Van Wert County Engineer. "There's a lot of virgin areas. They're very wooded. There's a lot of log jams, which we saw off of drone footage and aerial photos."

Northeast District

Commissioners reapprove ARP spending

Tribune Chronicle, January 26, 2023

Four county buildings still will get American Rescue Plan Act funds after the Trumbull County commissioners voted to rescind, then reapprove, funding that was approved last week in the hopes of avoiding a mistake on the county audit.

A resolution adopted March 30, raised the county's micro-purchase threshold to $50,000, allowing commissioners to make most ARP purchases up to that amount without going through the competitive bidding process, but quotes still need to be obtained. The competitive bidding process takes time and resources, requiring the posting of a job for a certain amount of time and the ranking of bidders. Getting quotes is a less formal process that only requires getting an estimate on the price of a project.

Central District

New Franklin County Coroner ready to meet challenges, expand staff

WOSU News, January 25, 2022

Newly appointed Franklin County Coroner, Dr. Nathaniel Overmire said he's ready to meet the challenges of his job.

A near-record number of overdoses, along with increasing suicides and people still dying of COVID are causing a great demand in services.

"I bring a lot of empathy," said Overmire, an osteopathic family physician. "As a family physician, we need to maintain relationships with our patients and partner with them in their health. And so, I'm hoping to bring some of those skills and attributes to this office."

Overmire, who took over after the retirement last year of Dr. Anahi Ortiz, said he's going on a listening tour throughout Franklin County. "There was a big meeting with some law enforcement, different agencies, and I'm looking forward to working with all the county agencies on public health to ensure that we can continue to solve this epidemic that we're seeing in Franklin County," said Overmire.

Southwest District

New Children Services union deal to cost taxpayers $500,000 more

Journal News, January 24, 2023

The Butler County Children Services union and management had similar goals when negotiating a new three-year deal and that was to make sure the agency is paying competitive wages to keep personnel.

The county commissioners approved the new deal Monday, and it will cost taxpayers about $506,000 more than the current contract that expired last July. County Administrator Judi Boyko said about $120,000 is for retroactive pay — $1,500 lump sum payments for 80 eligible employees — and $390,000 in pay adjustments.

"I appreciate that is a lot of money," she said. "Based on the salary study the commissioners conducted in July of 2022, coupled with detailed compensation review of like agencies in the region and the adjoining counties to Butler County, we identified that Butler County was low as compared to compensation for certain positions."

Southeast District

Holmes County moves forward with $7.5M health department building

Daily Record, January 24, 2023

The proposed new home of the Holmes County General Heath District is one step closer to becoming a reality with the hiring of a general contractor.

Holmes County Commissioner Joe Miller shared details of an all-day work session held last week that brought about an agreement with Classical Construction as the general contractor for the two-story building to go up on Glen Drive between Rodhe's IGA and the Holmes County District Public Library.

Because of escalated costs, the project started at an estimated $4 million a few years ago, but is now approved for a cost up to $7.5 million.

Tekton Engineering is designing the structure and Classical Construction is the building contractor, said Miller at Monday's board meeting. "Basically, it's a two-story building with a basement level."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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FEBRUARY 10
CORSA BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY 11 - 14
NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE (Washington, D.C.)

FEBRUARY 24
CEBCO BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1
NEW MEMBER TRANINING (CCAO BOARD MEETING ON THE 27TH)

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