February 13, 2023

CCAO members Commissioner Denise Driehaus (Hamilton County) and Commissioner Kathryn Whittington (Ashtabula County) were among the many Ohio county commissioners, county executives, and county council members who attended the NACo Legislative Conference over the weekend.

Commissioner Driehaus (first on the left) and Commissioner Whittington (second from the right) were joined in the above photo by NACo President Denise Winfrey, Dr. Rahul Gupta (Director of the White House Office on National Drug Control Policy), Former NACo President Gary Moore, and NACo Rural Action Caucus Chair Greg Puckett.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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CCAO welcomes James Kennedy to the Policy Team

Last Monday, CCAO formally welcomed James Kennedy to the Association. He will work with the Policy Team as a policy analyst**.**

James brings a wealth of experience to the team and will be a vital asset to Ohio counties. He has worked as an intern with the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Buckeye Institute, and with the Tennessee Legislation Service. James also served for four years as a legislative aide for Ohio House Representative Derek Merrin (R-Moncolva).

He most recently worked for a year with the Martin County (Florida) Board of County Commissioners as the county's legislative coordinator. In this role he worked closely with commissioners in Martin County, other local leaders, the state legislature, and federal officials such as Senator Marco Rubio. One of his focus areas with Martin County was water quality issues, an important policy area for every Ohio county.

James has jumped right into his work with the team, participating in the Policy Team's meetings with legislators on CCAO budget priorities. We are glad to have him with the Association and are excited for our members to meet him at New Member Training and throughout the year.

CCAO and OHPELRA launch Recruitment and Retention survey

CCAO and the Ohio Public Employer Labor Relations Association (OHPELRA) have joined together to conduct a survey of public employers across Ohio to help identify strategies that they are utilizing to retain and recruit employees during the current labor market. It is vital that public employers maintain robust workforces to provide services to their residents. By learning what colleagues in other parts of the state are doing to retain and recruit, public agencies can find what strategies would work for them in their own unique situation.

To foster participation, the results of this survey will be shared with those employers who respond one month before the results are shared generally.

This survey is open to all public employers, from county agencies, townships, school districts, state agencies, and everything in between.

You can access the survey here.

Thank you for your help in bolstering Ohio's public workforce!

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.

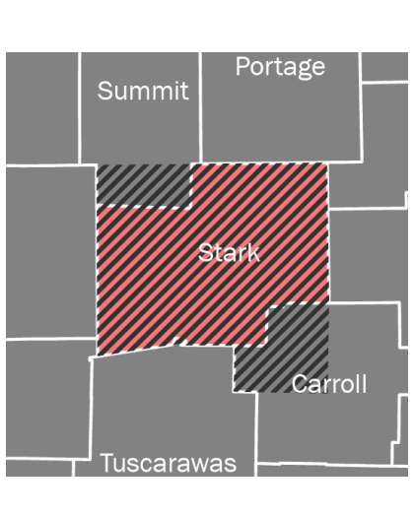
Registration can be completed here or through the link on the event page on CCAO's website.

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.

Happy birthday to Stark County!

Stark County was established 215 years ago today! The county, organized in 1808, is named after James Star, a Revolutionary War general who led militiamen from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont to victory in the Battle of Bennington, an early turning point in the war that set up the major American victory at Saratoga.



Stark County was created out of land formerly belong to Columbiana County and land that was under the general administration of the state (not formally a part of any county).

Stark County was home to the United States' 25th president, William McKinley. McKinley was born in Trumbull County but after completing his service during the Civil War, he set up a law office in Canton. While he is famous for his service as Governor of Ohio, a member of the US House of Representatives, and, of course, President, his first elected office was Stark County Prosecutor, which he served as from 1869-1871.

The First Ladies National Historic Site is located in Canton, specifically the preserved home of Ida McKinley, President McKinley's wife. The site, split between the home and the City Bank Building that contains the site's library, is open year-round and contains artifacts, documents, and stories related to the history of the American First Lady.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Secretary of State issues directive to county boards of elections

Last week, Secretary of State Frank LaRose issued Directive 2023-03 to county boards of elections regarding provisions in House Bill 458 of the 134th General Assembly.

Among the provisions in the bill were changes to the types of identification documents that Ohioans can use for voter registration and voting. The directive provides a chart that gives an overview of what documents were acceptable before the bill and what are when the bill becomes effective.

Directive 2023-03 also provides a summary of changes made to the absentee and early voting schedule and other administrative law changes.

December 2022 Ohio Labor Market Review available

The December 2022 Ohio Labor Market Review is now available!

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Bureau of Labor Market Information produces this report monthly. It includes current and historical data on employment by industry, hours, and earnings. It also includes civilian labor force estimates of employment and unemployment, selected unemployment compensation data, job openings and labor turnover ratios, and other information.

Economic developers, researchers, economists, and workforce professionals use this data for a variety of things:

- To evaluate the economic health of Ohio's labor market.
- To guide fiscal and monetary policy decisions.
- To forecast tax revenues.
- To guide decisions on business locations, sales, and purchases.
- To compare employment, hours, and earnings across industries or the economy as a whole.
- To determine the employment base of states and areas for bond ratings.
- To analyze phases of the business cycle.

To view this report and other labor market information, visit OhioLMI.com. If you have questions, please call (614) 752-9494 or email contactlmi@jfs.ohio.gov.

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 survey and provide the state your opinion.

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 and ODJFSA to host webinar on the ending of the Public Health Emergency

On February 24, CCAO will host a webinar presented by Joel Potts, the Executive Director of the Ohio Job and Family Service Directors' Association (ODJFSA) regarding the end of the federal Public Health Emergency. You can access the registration link here.

We urge our members to attend this webinar.

Since March of 2020, two major human services programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, sometimes referred to as food assistance or food stamps) and Medicaid, have operated under different federal rules as a result of the Public Health Emergency. These special procedures are coming to an end in March and April.

In March, Ohioans receiving SNAP benefits will no longer receive an emergency allotment (at least an extra $95 a month per household), which will result in the loss of $126 million in Ohio currently going to local grocery stores each month.

CMS will allow Ohio to begin removing people from the Medicaid rolls in April.

Potts will help CCAO members understand these rule changes and what the state and county JFS agencies will do to manage the transition.

We urge CCAO members to attend this webinar. These changes will have profound impacts on ***every community*** in the state. It is gravely important that commissioners, county executives, and county council members are aware of these upcoming changes so they can help support their county JFS workforce during these times.

Ohio Safety Congress & Expo opens registration

Registration is open! The 2023 Ohio Safety Congress & Expo® (OSC23®) will be live and in-person at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, March 8-10, 2023. This year, a select number of sessions will also be live-streamed.

With over 100 educational sessions and continuing education, there is something for everyone at OSC23®. Choose between 10 educational tracks, including one for government employee safety. ***Training satisfies the BWC 2-hour safety training requirement for Group Rating and Group Retro members.***

Registration is free!

New for 2023 – The Knowledge Hub located on the South side of the Expo Marketplace. Participate in live demonstrations and experience workshops on a new level.

For more information and to register, visit www.ohiosafetycongress.com.

Safe Routes to School grant program accepting applications

The Safe Routes to School grant program within the Ohio Department of Transportation is now open for applications. A total of $5 million is available, with applications closing on March 3.

The program is aimed at infrastructure projects that are designed to help facilitate the ability for students to walk and bike to school safely and non-infrastructure projects such as events to promote walking and biking. Schools serving all grades K-12 are eligible targets for grant funding.

Applications for infrastructure-related projects must be filed in conjunction with a subdivision that has maintenance authority, such as a county or municipalitiy.

Questions about the SRTS application process can be sent to Caitlin Harley at Caitlin.Harley@dot.ohio.gov.

Ohio Workforce Association posts upcoming training opportunities

The Ohio Workforce Association has posted a number of upcoming professional development course opportunities for the coming months. All sessions are virtual and cost $195 per attendee. If you are interested in registering for any of the sessions, you can do so by calling Mona Zink at 330-244-3508.

- **Turning Conflict into Collaboration** (February 27)
  - Conflict is natural within the workplace and a predictable part of working with others. Yet unresolved conflict negatively affects morale, motivation, communication, attitudes and productivity. If handled appropriately, conflict can lead to positive, cooperative situations.
- **Effective Organizational Leadership: Engage and Execute** (March 23)
- **Generations Working Together** (April 20)
  - If you interact with several generations of employees or customers and want to improve productivity, communication cohesiveness and morale, you will gain a new perspective from this highly engaging program presented by the facilitator in costume and language style of each generation.
- **Coaching Accountability** (May 17)
  - Participants will discuss and develop action plans for coaching one of the most difficult employee mindsets: resistance to change and responsibility. They will learn to encourage accountability for innovation, creative problem solving and collaboration in today's empowered team environments.

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.

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.

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 Bipartisan 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

Mercer County Commissioners Approve $2.9 Million For Agriculture Center

Mercer County Outlook, February 2, 2023

The Mercer County Commissioners at their Tuesday morning meeting voted 3-0 to award Westerheide Construction of Sidney a $2.9 million contract on the proposed restructuring of the new agriculture building. Westerheide Construction's base bid was for $2.7 million plus six of its seven alternate bid items since the project came in within 10% of the engineer's estimate.

The converting of the 20,000-square-foot former Cheryl Ann facility located at 4980 Mud Pike will be occupied in the future by the offices for the Soil and Water Conservation District, the OSU Extension Agency and United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. The hope is that the center could be completed by the end of this year.

Commissioners and federal officials signed off on a 10-year-lease agreement for space within the center. Under the terms of the agreement, commissioners will pay the upfront costs to meet the federal government's specific building and utility demands or tenant improvements.

Northeast District

Stark County commissioners start early talks on county jail renovation

Canton Repository, February 8, 2023

Stark County is looking to renovate the county jail.

The county commissioners met with Sheriff George Maier and county Facilities Director Tom Serra this week to discuss infrastructure improvements needed at the original part of the Stark County Jail that is roughly 60 years old.

"I think it's time to start seriously taking a look at what we're going to do down the road," Maier said.

Maier told commissioners the original jail facility has been experiencing plumbing and electrical issues. Some infrastructure hasn't been updated since the building was constructed.

Administrator Brant Luther said the county has been exploring the idea of using a method called construction manager at-risk for improvements at the jail. This means the county and a construction manager would negotiate a guaranteed maximum price, and the construction manager would be responsible for any costs that exceed it.

Central District

Commissioners, Cadence At Odds Over Landscaping

Union County Daily Digital, February 1, 2022

While the Cadence Solar Project is scheduled to begin construction in September of this year, what the site will look like from the road or from surrounding properties remains up in the air following a presentation from Invenergy (Cadence's parent company) this morning to the Union County Board of Commissioners at their regular weekly meeting.

Following a presentation from Invenergy's Erin Saal, Senior Associate Renewable Development, the Commissioners had plenty to say about what kind of fencing and landscaping will be shielding the solar farms from the county byways and adjacent homes.

But all three commissioners had their doubts about how the fencing and landscaping will coming into play once the solar farms are in place. While Ms. Saal told those in attendance this morning that Invenergy is planning on using treated-wood fencing and shrubbery, a photo of a similar site that was issued to the Commissioners showed nothing of the sort, instead depicting bare ground and a chain link fence surrounding a large array of panels. Commissioner Robinson was particularly skeptical about the ground cover that will be placed under the solar panels and how that ground cover would be maintained.

Southwest District

Greene County puts 2 more townships off limits for large-scale solar development

Dayton Daily News, February 9, 2023

Three additional Greene County townships have joined Cedarville Twp. in placing requests before the county board of commissioners, asking to be declared off-limits from large-scale utility solar development.

Xenia Twp., Sugarcreek Twp., and Ross Twp. all placed formal requests before the Greene County Board of Commissioners to declare them a restricted area from large-scale or "economically significant" solar and wind farms, according to public documents.

Commissioners approved the designation for Xenia Twp. and Sugarcreek Twp. during their regular meeting Thursday and will consider the smaller Ross Twp.'s request on Feb. 24. Cedarville Twp.'s request has already been approved.

Southeast District

County officials investigate Murray City's many infrastructure problems

Logan Daily, February 11, 2023

Hocking County commissioners Sandra Ogle and Jessica Dicken went on the road Thursday afternoon, to explore several of the structural problems throughout Murray City, some of which may or may not be related to the sewer renovations done by XPress Underground.

The commissioners were accompanied by Gary Silcott and a second representative of DLZ, who oversaw the project; Douglas Dillon and Maggi Berry from the county engineer's office; and several residents and officials from Murray City and its township.

The visit followed from last week's public meeting in the village, which took place at the fire station and featured a general discussion of the current problems and an airing of concerns about the proposed settlement with XPress.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

FEBRUARY 24
CEBCO BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY 24
CCAO WEBINAR: OHIO JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION (register here)

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

DID YOU KNOW?

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Ottawa County

Ottawa County's North Bass Island is home to Ohio's oldest and smallest American Viticultural Area, the Isle St. George AVA. An AVA is an official boundary established by the Tax and Trade Bureau of the US Department of Treasury designating the area as a wine grape-growing region. The Isle St. George AVA was established on August 20, 1982, although the history of viticulture on the island dates back a century before.

While the AVA is coterminous with the island, only about half of the island is used for wine-grape production. The grapes grown on the island are primarily Riesling, Merlot, and Chardonnay.

An aerial view of North Bass Island, the location of Ohio's oldest and smallest AVA, Isle St. George.

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