March 13, 2023

The Seneca County Courthouse was lit green last week in honor of Ohio 4-H Week!

4-H, which educates more than six million kids annually, was founded by Clark County, Ohio, native A.B. Graham. He convened a meeting in 1902 to create the Boys and Girls Agricultural Experiment Club to revolutionize agricultural education and non-formal youth development. The club would later evolve into 4-H.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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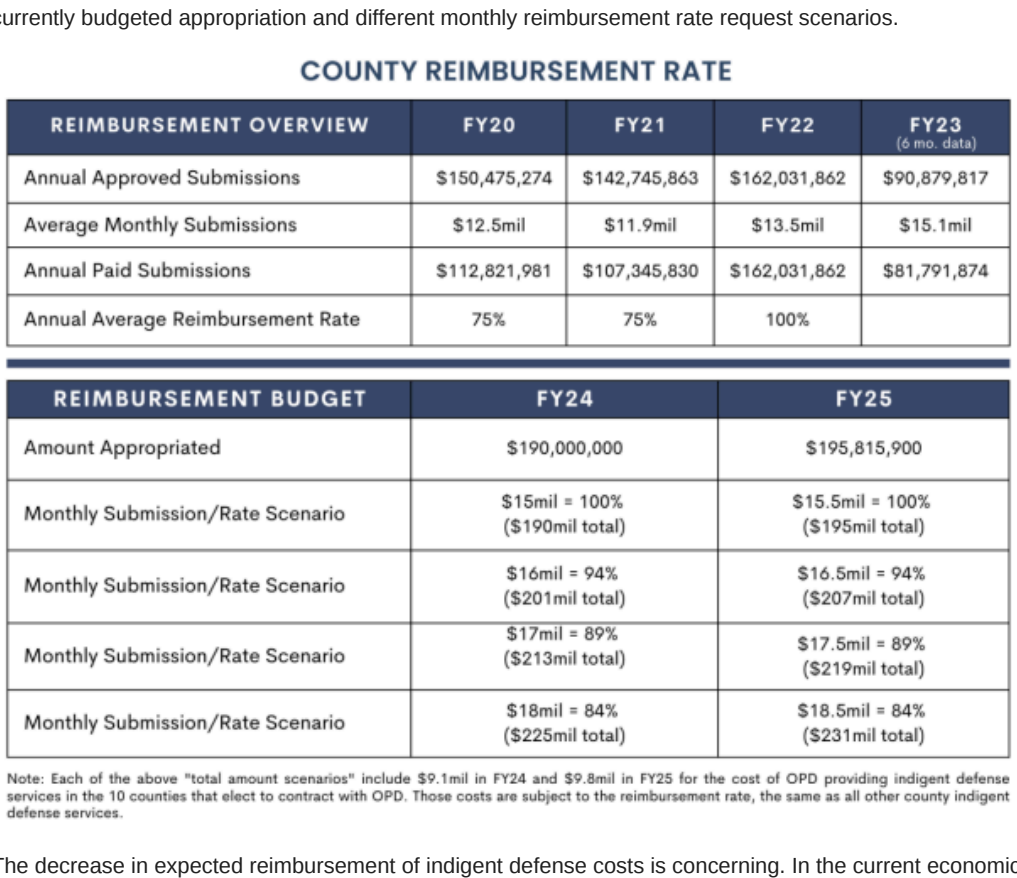
Public Defender releases information showing reimbursement rate to drop to 80% for SFY 2023

On Wednesday, Ohio Public Defender Tim Young sent a letter to Governor Mike DeWine, Senate President Matt Huffman, and Speaker of the House Jason Stephens regarding indigent defense reimbursement. In the letter, he revealed that the final reimbursement rate for the current state fiscal year will likely be approximately 80% (and that requests the rest of the fiscal year will be reimbursement at 70%).

While it had been clear in past communications with OPD that the final reimbursement rate for FY 2023 would fall short of 100%, the degree of the drop came as a surprise to the Association. This information was echoed in OPD's periodic update memorandum to counties, distributed on Thursday.

The tables below are included in both the OPD communications linked to earlier in the article and show a history of the reimbursement rate and monthly reimbursement requests from FY 2020 through the first six months of FY 2023 and show the likely reimbursement rate for the two upcoming fiscal years based on the currently budgeted appropriation and different monthly reimbursement rate request scenarios.



COUNTY REIMBURSEMENT RATE

REIMBURSEMENT OVERVIEW	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23 (6 mo. data)
Annual Approved Submissions	$150,475,274	$142,745,863	$162,031,862	$90,879,817
Average Monthly Submissions	$12.5mil	$11.9mil	$13.5mil	$15.1mil
Annual Paid Submissions	$112,821,981	$107,345,830	$162,031,862	$81,791,874
Annual Average Reimbursement Rate	75%	75%	100%	

REIMBURSEMENT BUDGET	FY24	FY25
Amount Appropriated	$190,000,000	$195,815,900
Monthly Submission/Rate Scenario	$15mil = 100% ($190mil total)	$15.5mil = 100% ($195mil total)
Monthly Submission/Rate Scenario	$16mil = 94% ($201mil total)	$16.5mil = 94% ($207mil total)
Monthly Submission/Rate Scenario	$17mil = 89% ($213mil total)	$17.5mil = 89% ($219mil total)
Monthly Submission/Rate Scenario	$18mil = 84% ($225mil total)	$18.5mil = 84% ($231mil total)

Note: Each of the above "total amount scenarios" include $9.1mil in FY24 and $9.8mil in FY25 for the cost of OPD providing indigent defense services in the 10 counties that elect to contract with OPD. Those costs are subject to the reimbursement rate, the same as all other county indigent defense services.

The decrease in expected reimbursement of indigent defense costs is concerning. In the current economic climate, where counties are already faced with inflationary pressures and difficulty finding and retaining workforce, the hit that the decreased reimbursement rate will have on county budgets poses a threat to other county services. As more of the county general fund must be dedicated to indigent defense, less funds are available for other services that counties must provide.

CCAO encourages our members to reach out to their legislators, especially if those legislators are on the House Finance Committee or the House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety, to stress that indigent defense is a state responsibility that counties have been forced to administer and pay for. The increases in costs are not a result of fiscal irresponsibility but rather are responses to the same financial pressures that employers, both public and private, are facing across the state and nation.

CCAO's legislative platform for the current General Assembly calls for the state to create a pilot program to allow counties to opt-in to a state-administered program. This week's news of the reimbursement rate decrease only makes it more imperative that the General Assembly and the DeWine-Husted Administration work with counties to transition the indigent defense system to one primarily administered by the state. This is the only way that the state can control costs within the indigent defense system without causing significant budgetary strain on county general funds.

If you have any questions concerning indigent defense reimbursement or if you have comments on how to best message CCAO's priorities on this complex policy area, please contact CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org

Commissioner Dan Dean interviewed about HB 1

The March 10th episode of The State of Ohio on the Ohio Channel focused primarily on House Bill 1 (Representative Adam Mathews). The bill would flatten Ohio's income tax to a single bracket and make several changes to the state's property tax system (read more about HB 1 in the March 3 and March 10 issues of *Statehouse Report*).

Statehouse News Bureau Chief Karen Kasler spoke with economist Howard Fleeter and Fayette County Commissioner and CCAO Taxation and Finance Committee Chair Dan Dean about the bill. Commissioner Dean's segment begins at the 10:30 mark of the video linked to above.

Commissioner Dean highlighted the impact that the changes on inside millage will have on the ability of counties to provide vital services. Since inside millage revenue is able to grow with inflation and property growth, imposing a limit on the growth of that revenue stream could force counties to make budget cuts.

Long time Van Wert County Commissioner Gary Adams passes away

On March 4, Gary D. Adams, former Van Wert County Commissioner, passed away at the age of 86. Gary served as a Van Wert County Commissioner for 28 years and also served as a Jackson Township Trustee fora time as well.

In addition to his public service, Gary was a gospel music icon. He founded the gospel group Trinity and was inducted into the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2019.

One of his granddaughters, Ryanne Bollenbacher, is the Van Wert County administrator and clerk, keeping Gary's spirit of public service alive.

Twelfth round of Violent Crime Reduction grants awarded

On Friday, Governor Mike DeWine announced the 12th round of grant awards issued under the Ohio Violent Crime Reduction Grant Program.

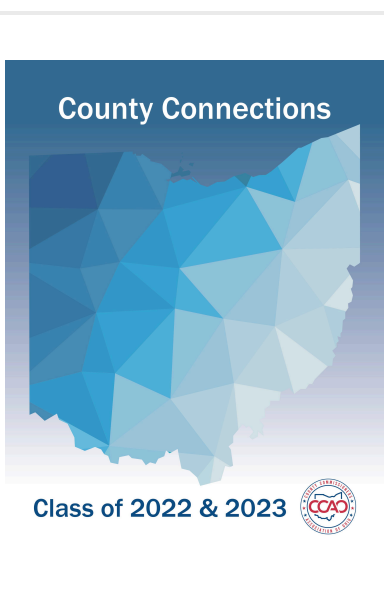
The 12th round of awards saw grant funds distributed to 12 local law enforcement agencies across the state; seven of these were county sheriff's offices:

- Adams County Sheriff: $87,069
- Fayette County Sheriff: $245,030
- Gallia County Sheriff: $90,950
- Guernsey County Sheriff: $396,170
- Morgan County Sheriff: $68,474
- Pickaway County Sheriff: $231,054
- Wyandot County Sheriff: $168,517

Thus far, the DeWine-Husted Administration has distributed grants to 170 law enforcement agencies, totaling about $80 million of the $100 million program.

You can view a full list of grant awardees here.

2022-2023 edition of County Connections published



The 2022-2023 County Connections Yearbook is now available on the CCAO website! You can access it here.

County Connections is your one-stop shop to get to know CCAO's new members from the last two years. Since the beginning of 2022, CCAO has welcomed 41 new commissioners, county executives, and county council people to our ranks, coming from every corner of the state.

Northwest Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association to host meeting on March 29

On March 29, the Northwest Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association will host its quarterly meeting in Crawford County

The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. with a greeting from Representative Riordan McClain and the Crawford County commissioners and engineer at 9:45 a.m.

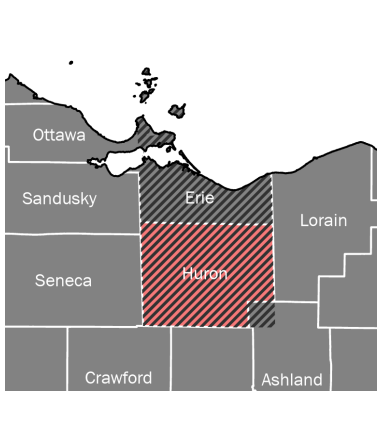
Lt. Governor Jon Husted, a stalwart ally of counties, will join the meeting from 11:20 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. to meet with commissioners and engineers and discuss a variety of subjects.

The event will also feature discussion with representatives of Rumpke Recycling, a tour of Advanced Fiber (a local company that converts recycled material into fibers for insulation projects and other purposes), and a tour of Crossroads Candles (a local company that produces candles with glass windows allowing a chance to watch the candle-making process).

You can access the agenda and the registration form here. The deadline to apply is March 24 (the Friday before the meeting) and registration costs $18.

Happy birthday Huron County!

Last Tuesday, Huron County celebrated its 214th birthday. The county was formed out of land that had previously not been assigned to any county. Its name is derived from the word that early French settlers to the area used to refer to the Wyandot Native American tribe in the area.



When it was originally created, Huron County consisted of most of the "Firelands" portion of the Connecticut Western Reserve. This region got its name because it was originally created as restitution for residents of several Connecticut towns that were burned by British forces during the Revolutionary War.

One of Ohio's greatest sports figures hailed from Huron County. Paul Brown spent the first nine years of his life in Norwalk before his family moved to Massillon in Stark County. Brown would go on to coach Massillon Washington High School to four high school football national championships, the Ohio State Buckeyes to one NCAA football national championship, and the Cleveland Browns to four straight All-American Football Conference championships and three National Football League championships. He also helped found the Cincinnati Bengals and was the team's first coach. His family still owns the Bengals.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Sunshine Week, focusing on open meetings and public records, begins today

Today marks the beginning of Sunshine Week. Sunshine Week refers to "Sunshine Laws," provisions of the Ohio Revised Code that govern open meetings and public records requests.

Open meeting laws and laws governing what are and are not public records are important laws for county officials to understand. The Ohio Attorney General provides several helpful resources for local governments.

The main resource provided by the Attorney General is the Sunshine Laws Manual, sometimes referred colloquially as the "Yellow Book." The Manual is a detailed walkthrough of what qualifies as a public office, a record, and a public record, as well as explaining the process of complying with public meeting requirements and public record requests. It also explains exemptions from public meetings and public records. The Manual is updated annually to incorporate any statutory changes made in the preceding year (at press time for this issue of Counties Current, the 2023 Sunshine Laws Manual has not been published yet).

The Attorney General also provides a model public records request policy that local governments can adopt.

Finally, the Attorney General hosts Sunshine Laws Training, a free three-hour training session provided to public officials and the general public. Attending one of the training events satisfies the requirement in ORC 109.43 that elected officials (or a designee) attend a training event on Sunshine Laws once per elected term.

There are ten training sessions remaining in 2023, with many taking place virtually. The two closest upcoming events are on March 22 in West Chester and on April 11 virtually. You can view the full schedule and register for events here.

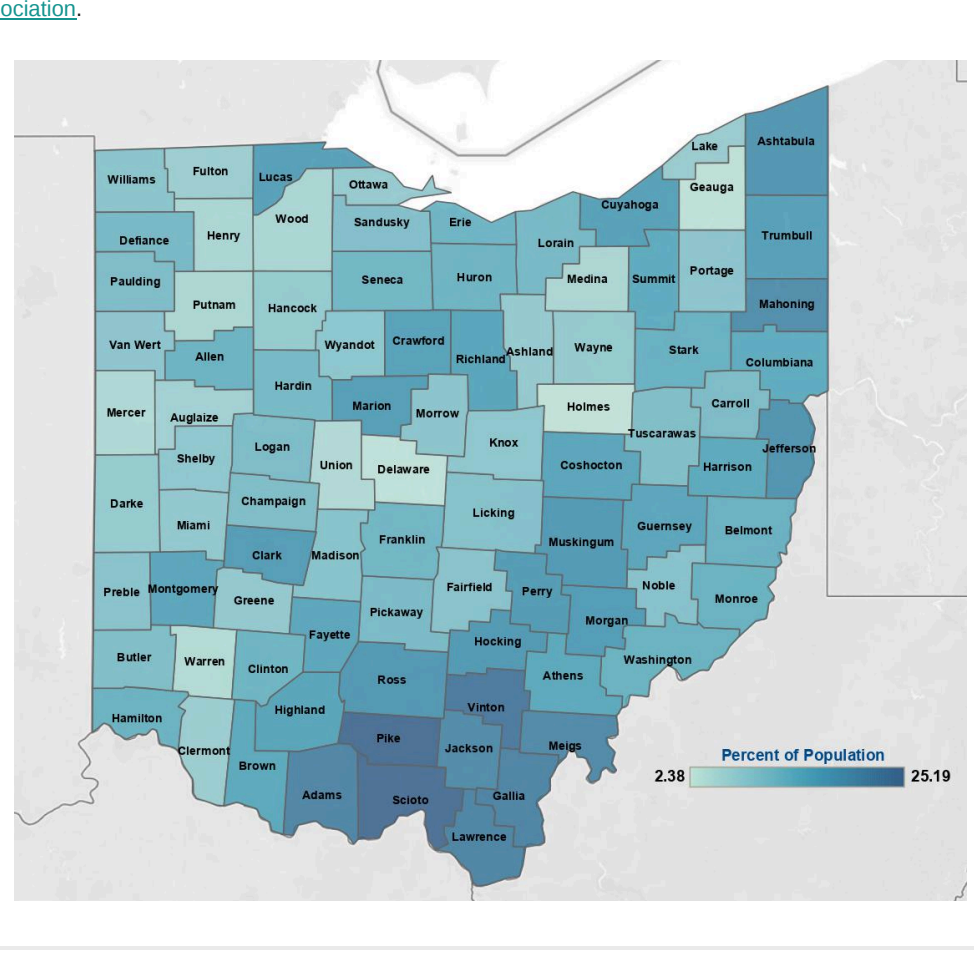
Interactive map shows county SNAP recipient data

Information compiled by DataOhio, the state government's primary data hub, shows SNAP recipient numbers and allotment amounts by county, as well many other important facts and figures.

With the recent expiration enhanced SNAP benefits (the full effect of which will be felt later this month when emergency allotments which previously were distributed no longer are), this data is useful to counties as they prepare to manage increased Job and Family Services workloads as SNAP recipients contact county offices to ask about their reduced benefits.

The map below shows counties shaded by the percentage of county population receiving SNAP benefits, as of November 2022.

This data was first brough to CCAO's attention by the Ohio Directors of Job and Family Services Association.



US Senators Brown and Collins reintroduce Windfall Elimination Provision repeal

On March 2, US Senators Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) reintroduced legislation that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) from the Social Security Act.

These provisions reduce Social Security benefits that individuals had accrued during time in the private sector if they go on to work in public positions. It's estimated that the provisions affect the retirement savings of more than 3 million Americans, including just under 250,000 Ohioans.

The provisions have served as an unintentional barrier to public service, as doing so would cause Ohioans to see their Social Security reduced by anywhere from 40% to completely eliminated.

Eliminating the WEP has been a priority of Tuscarawas County Commissioner and CCAO 1st Vice President Chris Abbuhl and Shelby County Commissioner and Executive Committee Member Julie Ehemann, as well as hundreds of public officials across the state and nation.

You can read the full press release issued by Senator Brown's office here.

Court declines OneOhio Foundation Board dismissal request; case proceeds to judgement stage

On Thursday, a Franklin County judge declined to dismiss a case against the OneOhio Recovery Foundation, ruling that the board is a public body and is therefore subject to open meeting law. You can read the full ruling here.

The denial of the dismissal request moves the case to the next step in the process, which will involve a summary judgement on the facts of the case. There is no immediate timeline for when that will take place.

If you have questions about how the ruling may impact your regional structure, please contact Connie Luck at press@oneohiofoundation.com.

NOTE: The court case involving the OneOhio Foundation Board does ***NOT*** affect the direct payments from the national settlement administrator that local governments are receiving. As a reminder, 30% of opioid settlement funds distributed to Ohio will flow directly to participating local governments. Any court decisions pertaining to the OneOhio Foundation have ***NO EFFECT*** on these funds.

Auditor of State issues advisory to state and local governments on phishing scams

Last week, Auditor of State Keith Faber issued an advisory to state and local government employees regarding an increase in cyberscams targeting public offices.

These scams are referred to as "re-direct schemes," wherein emails impersonating government vendors or other government employees request to have payments sent to a different bank account which the scammer controls.

CCAO encourages counties review the advisory, as well as other cybersecurity information the Auditor of State provides, to ensure that you do not fall victim to a scam and lose taxpayer funds. More information regarding cybersecurity best practices can be also be learned from CORSA.

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.

Lake Erie Commission to host event on the Ohio Domestic Action Plan in April

On April 20, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission will be hosting a virtual event to review progress made on the Ohio Domestic Action Plan and kick off updates that will occur on the plan during 2023.

Among action items currently included in the Domestic Action Plan are H2Ohio support for home sewage treatment system remediation, establishing science-based agricultural best management practices and supporting farmers to implement them, and integrating the role of watershed planning at the local level to help better reduce nutrients efficiently.

You can find more information about the Lake Erie Commission and Ohio's Domestic Action Plan here.

Buckeye Environmental Network to host event on harmful effects of brine

On March 23, the Buckeye Environmental Network will be hosting a webinar moderated by Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason on the effects of using "brine" (oil and gas waste) on state roads as a dust suppressant and a deicer.

Dr. Julie Weatherington-Rice and retired Fire Battalion Chief Silverio Caggiano will explore the radioactive and toxic properties of oil & gas waste, how it is widely spread throughout most of Ohio's counties, and its effects on the human body.

Registration for the event is free and can be completed here.

Glenn College of Public Affairs MAPS recommendations for local government leaders

The John Glenn College of Public Affairs at the Ohio State University hosts a number of Management Advance for the Public Service (MAPS) professional development courses annually. The Glenn College has released a list of eight upcoming courses that it believes will be of particular value for local government leaders.

The first four local government MAPS courses are listed below. You can find the rest of the local government leaders MAPS courses here and a complete listing of courses here.

Understanding Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Participants will learn how concepts in cost-benefit analysis can help decisionmakers and policymakers think more clearly about the impacts of policy options they have at their disposal and the trade-offs they pose.
- March 16, Virtual (Zoom)
- Six Continuing Legal Education credits

Strategic Inclusive Leadership

- Participants will explore the moral and business cases for DE&I work and how diversity leads to more inclusive workplaces, stronger performing teams and a competitive advantage.
- April 4, Virtual (Zoom)

Foundations of Community Engagement

- As a community leader, it is important for you to have a good understanding of the purpose, approaches and tools for engaging your community, and working effectively with your leadership team to promote community engagement. During this session, participants will learn best practices for community engagement.
- April 11, Virtual (Zoom)

Building a Succession Pipeline

- This course approaches succession planning as an organizational responsibility, where everyone can and is expected to play a role in successful succession practices. Participants explore the importance of succession management and how everyone in the organization is already contributing to how it is done today.
- April 18, OSU Columbus Campus

GOPC to host Brownfields Conference in May, registration now open

The Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) will host the 2023 Ohio Brownfields Conference on May 9, 2023 in Columbus! Early bird registration is open until the end of February. Register today to lock in a discounted rate.

The conference will feature an exhibitor hall for attendees to connect and network with remediation and redevelopment professionals. Information on educational panels has been announced and can be found on the OhioBrownfields.com website. Accreditation is in process for Continuing Learning Education (CLE) credits through the Ohio Supreme Court and AICP credits through the American Planning Association.

The lunchtime Keynote will be Tom Murphy, former mayor of Pittsburgh and current senior resident fellow and Canizaro/Klingbeil Families Chair for Urban Development at Urban Land Institute (ULI). During his time as mayor, Murphy initiated a public/private partnership strategy that leveraged more than $4.5 billion in economic development activity for the city. Murphy also developed strategic partnerships to transform more than 1,000 acres of blighted, abandoned industrial properties into new commercial, residential, retail, and public uses.

Full more information about the 2023 Ohio Brownfields Conference, please visit OhioBrownfields.com. Please direct any questions about registration or sponsorship to Aaron Clapper (aclapper@greaterohio.org or 740-221-9584).

Grant writing assistance and resources available

Grants are a valuable resource for counties to utilize, but knowing how best to develop competitive applications can be difficult and the learning curve cause counties to lose out on grants. Luckly, federal agencies and nonprofits offer resources to assist in developing competitive applications. Federal agency websites point to internal and external sources and many conduct free training and targeted one on one or small group technical assistance. Here are some current resources to explore:

- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse
- Great Lakes Community Action Partnership
- Local Infrastructure Hub
- National Wildlife Federation
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- State and Community Energy Programs-Tools and Resources
- US Department of Transportation
- USDA Rural Development
- 10,000 Communities Initiative

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 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 rebuilding of museum wall

LimaOhio.com, March 9, 2023

Allen County Commissioners recently passed a resolution to continue work on the Allen County Museum. The retaining wall outside of the museum along Market Street is undergoing repairs. According to Allen County Commissioner Brian Winegardner, the original wall began to crumble over 18 months ago. Winegardner said once construction workers began to repair the wall they soon realized it needed more work.

"This is an ongoing project," said Winegardner. The resolution passed on Thursday morning approved $15,775 additional monies to the project. Allen County Commissioner Beth Seibert said the county did receive a $50,000 appropriation from the state capital budget as a reimbursement. Seibert also said the project will cost in total around $70,000.

Northeast District

Former Ashland County landfill being eyed for 15 MW solar power facility

Ashland Source, March 10, 2023

Could the former Ashland County landfill off County Road 1754 become home to a solar power facility?

That's a question the Ashland County commissioners are considering after hearing a presentation Thursday from Kurt Princic of CEP Renewables.

Commissioners have not publicly stated if they are in favor of the project, though Ashland County Parks District spokespeople were not convinced it was a good idea, as the project could encroach on the adjacent and intertwined Byers Woods park.

CEP Renewables — a company based out of Red Bank, New Jersey — is proposing the construction of a 15 MW solar-powered field on the east and west parcels that formerly made up the county landfill.

Central District

Commissioners receive briefing on Circleville grade separation

Circleville Herald, March 7, 2023

The Pickaway County Commissioners received an update from American Structurepoint Inc., a consultant working with the city on grade separation over the railroad tracks.

Frank Aransky, project development director for American Structurepoint, presented the commissioners with a map of the city to highlight the possible and potential places a grade separation would happen in Circleville.

The plan was to give the commissioners one last update before American Structurepoint begins stakeholder meetings with businesses and residents in the area of each proposal before opening the discussion up to the wider community during town hall public events.

Aranksy said through some feedback they identified the aforementioned locations and they're now moving to the public engagement process once that approval is given.

Southwest District

As roadwork costs skyrocket, Butler County plans for nearly 50 resurfacing projects

Journal-News, March 7, 2023

Butler County Engineer Greg Wilkens has 49 projects totaling $38.3 million identified for this year and 40.5% of the capital improvement plan is for resurfacing county and township roads.

Every year, Wilkens gives the county commissioners a preview of his plan to fix and improve county and township roads. This year, the largest cash outlay is the $16 million resurfacing program to tackle nearly 73 miles of rutted roads. In recent years, the paving budget has been in the neighborhood of $6 million, but it cost $9 million last year to pave 43 miles.

He credited the American Rescue Plan Act for the robust program this year, but tempered the good news with the fact costs have gone up dramatically.

Southeast District

HAPCAP official to help address Murray City's structural issues

Logan Daily, March 11, 2023

Over the last month, the Hocking County Commissioners have held multiple public meetings in Murray City to discuss the village's myriad structural problems relating to poor drainage, damaged sidewalks, and deteriorating streets. In session last week, Commissioner Sandra Ogle announced that the board had sought the services of Nathan Simons, community development coordinator at Hocking Athens Perry Community Action (HAPCAP), to assist the former mining town in funding and planning necessary improvement projects.

Located on the county's easternmost border, Murray City was approved in 2018 for a $2.85 million sewer overhaul project, which in a second round of bidding was awarded to the only contractor to make a proposal, XPress Underground. Over the course of their work XPress completed at least a substantial portion of the project, but according to many residents, county commissioners Ogle and Gary Waugh, Gary Silcott of DLZ, and community action agency HAPCAP, left in their wake damage to the town's infrastructure.

The commissioners stirred some controversy in the village earlier this year with their announcement that they would seek a settlement with XPress, rather than pursue a potentially costly and protracted legal battle. When they visited the village with an itemized list of drainage, sidewalk, and roadway deficiencies, the lack of clarity as to which problems were the fault of the contractor and which were pre-existing reaffirmed this decision.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

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MARCH 17
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 23
CCAO General Government meeting

MARCH 24
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 29
NW Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association meeting
Group Rating Annual Meeting

MARCH 31
CEBCO Annual Meeting

APRIL 19
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting
OCCO Legislative Reception

DID YOU KNOW?

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Vinton County

In the 1926, Vinton County set a statewide milestone by electing the first female sheriff in the state. The story of Maude Charles Collins, however, goes far beyond her historic election.

Born in 1894 to Fanny McCoy Charles (the daughter of Randall McCoy, the patriarch of the McCoy clan known for its feud with the Hatfield family) and Roland Charles, Maude Charles married Fletcher Collins and the couple had five children. Fletcher was elected Vinton County Sheriff in 1922.

On the night of October 8, 1925, Sheriff Fletcher Collins was killed in the line of duty while serving a warrant. By law, the county coroner should have succeeded Collins as the county sheriff, but he refused the office. On October 10, less than 48 hours after her husband was killed, the Vinton County Commissioners appointed Maude Collins to serve the remainder of her husband's term as county sheriff.

Maude's sister moved in with her to help raise her children while Maude served as sheriff.

OHIO
HISTORICAL MARKER
MAUDE C. COLLINS – LAW ENFORCEMENT PIONEER
VINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
THE OHIO HISTORY CONNECTION
2019
4-82

She proved to have a sharp analytical mind and sailed to election in 1926, the milestone election. Her election is more remarkable considering women had only received the right to vote seven years earlier.

Sheriff Collins received national attention when she solved a double murder with critical insight and intuition worthy of Sherlock Holmes. As her entry in the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame recounts it:

> *"Collins employed clever tactics to solve the murder: A set of footsteps appeared to incriminate a certain suspect. However, Collins was suspicious of the legitimacy of the footprints and suspected another person.*
>
> *To prove her theory, she retrieved a pair of boots owned by the suspect. They fitted exactly to the footprints, but she noticed their impressions were not deep in the soil. She looked at the difference in her own footprints and hypothesized that the footsteps could not have been made by a man, but by someone close to her own physical stature. Wearing the boots, she walked beside the original set of footprints. Thus, she concluded the murderer was a woman. With this evidence in hand, the woman whom Collins suspected confessed. The woman and her accomplice were tried for murder and sentenced to life terms."*

Collins would later serve as Vinton County Clerk of Courts and as matron of a school. She passed away in 1972 at the age of 78. You can read more about Sheriff Collins on the Vinton County Convention and Visitors Bureau website.

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