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January 22, 2024

Earlier this month, CCAO Board of Directors member and Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb attended the retirement party for former Hebron Mayor Jim Layton (center). Also attending the event was State Representative Kevin Miller (right), whose district includes Hebron and other parts of Licking County.

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

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

Back to Top

LAST CALL: CCAO conducting two surveys: jail projects and legislative relationship practices

County Jail Projects

CCAO and the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association have partnered to gather data on statewide capital funding needs for county and regional jail facilities. ***We hope to have all information gathered by January 31, 2024.*** Completing the data collection by this date will enable us to include results of the survey in materials distributed to candidates for the General Assembly.

When we last conducted a survey into these needs in 2019, we identified nearly $1.4 billion in funding needs across 44 counties and four regional jails. Since 2019, the DeWine-Husted Administration and the General Assembly have provided $175 million to jail projects across the state, helping to bring needed improvements to county jails.

As we head into the third capital budget since the state-county partnership on jail construction was renewed, both associations believe it is time to provide lawmakers an updated estimate of the statewide need, particularly given how costs have increased since 2019.

You can access the survey through the link below and can provide answers either through the questions in the survey or through a document upload link included at the survey's end. Please complete the survey here.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Kyle Petty, Managing Director of Policy for CCAO, and/or Bob Cornwell, Executive Director of BSSA.

Legislative Relationships

At its September meeting, the CCAO Board of Directors voted unanimously to create a Statehouse Advocacy Task Force. The mission of the task force will be to strengthen the advocacy efforts of CCAO members through effective relationship building strategies with members of the Ohio General Assembly and education on key CCAO policy priorities.

As part of the Task Force's mission to strength the Association's members' advocacy efforts through effective relationship building strategies with members of the Ohio General Assembly, CCAO is asking members to take a few minutes to complete a brief survey about how our members currently advocate and build relationships with their legislative delegation. ***We would like to have this information gathered by the end of next week*** so we can compile it before the Statehouse Advocacy Task Force's next meeting in February.

You can access the survey here. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact either Kyle Petty or Nick Ciolli.

Northwest District to hold meeting on March 20

On March 20, Fulton County will host the quarterly meeting of the Northwest Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association. The meeting will take place at the Fulton County Administration Building in Wauseon.

The meeting will feature announcements from CCAO, CEAO, CEBCO, and CORSA, and culminate in a tour of the recently renovated Fulton County Courthouse.

To register, please complete this form and send to Jessica Schuette via email at jschuette@fultoncountyoh.com, via fax at 41-337-9285, or mail to 152 S. Fulton Street, Suite 270, Wauseon, OH 43567. Registration must be submitted by March 6.

Notice to Clerks: Roster update form has been sent

As a note to clerks to boards of county commissioners, CCAO sent a form to your email addresses on Friday to provide updated information for the 2024 CCAO Roster. The Association is hopeful that this new form will streamline the process and allow for quicker updates and increased ease of use.

If you have not received the form or have trouble completing it, please reach out to Nedra Benson or Tim Hoverman.

Thank you for your work helping commissioners, county executives, and county council members!

A Special Thanks for to our Pinnacle Partner:

JobsOhio

Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

Senator Vance, colleagues introduce bill to extend Affordable Connectivity Program

Last week, Ohio Senator JD Vance and Vermont Senator Peter Welch, along with colleagues from both parties in the Senate and House of Representatives, introduced the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act.

The legislation would provide $7 billion to support affordable high-speed interest to qualifying households across the nation. The funding would allow the program to continue, as it is currently projected to exhaust its funding in April.

The Affordable Connectivity Program provides monthly discounts for internet service and has been utilized by more than 1.1 million households in Ohio (or 23% of Ohio households, the second highest enrollment rate in the program).

The bipartisan bill would extend the successful federal program and continue to expand broadband access to underserved areas of the state. You can learn more about the program at its website, including how to help residents of your community to apply.

FINAL WEEK to register for NACo Legislative Conference at discounted rate

Registration at a discounted rate for the 2024 NACo Legislative Conference (to be held in Washington, D.C., February 10 - 13) will continue until Friday, January 26. Registration for member counties is $575 until January 26; afterwards, "on-site" registration will cost $690. For non-member counties, the costs are $810 and $960, respectively.

The Legislative Conference brings the nation's county officials together to discuss federal policy issues that impact counties and offers the chance to engage with federal policymakers, both elected members of Congress and federal agency officials.

You can register for the conference and access more materials about it here.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

Back to Top

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

OEPA to host a webinar on environmental excellence award program

This Wednesday, the Ohio EPA will host a webinar on the Encouraging Environmental Excellence award program. The program is intended to recognize an organization's achievements in environmental stewardship.

The webinar will provide an overview of the program, discuss eligible entities and projects, and explain the benefits of receiving recognition through the award program.

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

Second round of America-250 grants open for applications

Last week, the Ohio Commission for the United States Semiquincentenial (also known as America 250-Ohio) announced that it was opening the second round of its grant program to fund educational and commemorative programing regarding the 250th anniversary of the independence and founding of the United States.

Applications for grants must be submitted by March 15.

There are two different levels of funding available:

- **Buckeye Impact Grants**
    - Up to $50,000 available per grant.
    - Intended for projects with statewide, regional, or significant local impact.
- **Trillium Local Activity Grants**
    - Up to $5,000 available per grant.
    - Intended for projects with a local or community-wide impact.

A wide variety of entities are eligible for the grants, including individuals. Individuals must apply through a fiscal agent or sponsor.

America 250-Ohio released a document with more information regarding the program, including details on eligible and ineligible use of funds.

If you have questions regarding the program, please contact grants@ohiohumanities.org.

Recording of CCAO, Ohio EMA solar eclipse webinar available

On Wednesday, CCAO hosted a webinar with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency regarding what counties should know and how they can prepare for the total solar eclipse that will occur later this year.

People within a 124-mile-wide band in the state of Ohio will experience a total solar eclipse on Monday, April 8, 2024. This extremely rare event is expected to draw large numbers of visitors to Ohio. Areas outside the band will experience a partial eclipse.

You can access the recording and a copy of the slide deck on CCAO's webinar archive.

Chloride Reduction Grant Program accepting applications through January

The Chloride Reduction Grant program will provide reimbursement grants up to $75,000 per individual unit of government. The grants will be used to support upgrades to road salt application equipment and storage facilities with the goal of making improvements to storage and providing tools to reduce over-application of deicing materials and subsequently protect and prevent chloride from impacting surface and ground water resources.

The grant portal will remain open through the close of business on January 31. The application can be downloaded here.

If you have any questions regarding the H2Ohio or the Chloride Reduction Grant process, please contact Policy Analyst James Kennedy.

Welcome Home Ohio program accepting applications

The Welcome Home Ohio (WHO) program, created in the state's operating budget, is accepting applications for its three constituent programs.

Welcome Home Ohio – Purchasing (WHO-P)

- Grant funds to pay the cost of purchasing qualifying residential property.
- No maximum defined for the purchase of property.

Welcome Home Ohio – Rehabilitation/Construction (WHO-RC)

- Grant funds to assist in the cost of rehabilitation or construction of qualifying residential property.
- A maximum of $30,000 can be applied to each qualified residential property.

Welcome Home Ohio – Tax Credits (WHO-TC)

- Tax credit is allocated once the qualifying residential property is sold to a qualifying individual.
- Maximum of $90,000 or one-third of the cost of rehab/construction, whichever is less.
- Tax credits shall be issued up to June 30, 2025.

Land banks, county land reutilization corporations, and counties that have adopted a resolution "of adopting and implementing procedures to facilitate the effective reutilization of nonproductive land" are eligible to apply for all three programs.

Each program will be funded with up to $25 million in each fiscal year of the current biennium. There is no maximum or minimum grant amount, but administrative and construction capacity must be detailed in the application.

Applications will be accepted through February 9, with further rolling applications accepted from February 12 to May 31, subject to available funding.

More information about the program, including links to FAQs, a webinar, and information about how to apply, can be found on the program's website.

Drug Law Enforcement Fund Grant program accepting applications

The Office of Criminal Justice Services in the Department of Public Safety is accepting applications through February 8 for the Drug Law Enforcement Fund Grant program.

The grant program is intended to defray expenses that drug task forces incur in performing functions related to enforcing the state's drug laws and other state laws related to illegal drug activity.

To be eligible for a grant, a law enforcement agency must meet a number of criteria, two of which are that the task force's implementing agency participates in the Ohio Incident-Based Reporting System or the FBI's NIBRS Collection Application and that there is a local match of at least 25%. Grants under the program are limited to $250,000 in a calendar year.

More information, including the other eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found in the grant's Request for Proposals.

Grants for adult day accepting applications

A grant program administered by the Department of Aging and the Office of Budget and Management is accepting applications to assist in the growth of new and existing adult day providers. The intent of the program is to expand accessibility to programs to enhance the quality of life of older Ohioans.

Funds from the $6 million grant program can be used for equipment, infrastructure modifications, service expansion, workforce retention, and more. Additionally, grantees will receive technical assistance from LeadingAge Ohio and Aging.

Applications close on February 2. More information about the program, including how to apply, can be found on the Ohio Grants Portal.

COUNTY NEWS

Back to Top

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

Northwest District

Residents voice concerns about solar project in Crawford County

Telegraph-Forum, January 18, 2024

Crawford County Commissioners held a consultation meeting with residents and representatives of National Grid Renewables to discuss the impacts of the Sycamore Creek solar project.

The meeting was called at request of Charles Stockmasters and his son, Tom, who had concerns that included buried tile and ditch mowing.

The Stockmasters said they were concerned about tile located in the future construction area that they fear could be crushed. They also asked about the ditch going through the area, and who would be responsible for mowing it after the construction begins.

Tom Stockmaster said currently neighbors mow and clean the ditch out of consideration to other residents, "to be a good neighbor."

Greg Courter, National Grid Renewals construction manager, said the company will maintain the ditch.

Associate developer Chris Snider reminded the Stockmasters of the setbacks for the project that ensure the tile will not be crushed during construction.

The proposed solar energy farm in Cranberry Township would span about 1,000 acres and be capable of generating 117 megawatts of energy, according to public records from the Ohio Power Siting Board.

Northeast District

Commissioners talk about the upcoming eclipse

Norwalk Reflector, January 16, 2024

Huron County Commissioners at their meeting on Tuesday morning talked about preparations for the upcoming solar eclipse, which is happening on April 8.

A solar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes between Earth and the Sun, thereby obscuring the view of the Sun from a small part of the Earth, totally or partially. Norwalk is in the immediate path of the solar eclipse. Officials expect between 100,000 and 200,000 people will be traveling through Huron County on the weekend of the eclipse.

Commissioners were joined by Huron County Emergency Management Agency Director Art Mead, who said he was concerned most about three things: trash, traffic, and cell phone service.

As for the cell phone service, Mead said a portable cell phone tower would be brought to uptown Norwalk on the weekend of the eclipse. That would help alleviate cell phone service disruptions, he said.

But officials are still concerned that having 100,000 to 200,000 extra people in the county on solar eclipse weekend would tax all of the county's systems.

Central District

Etna Township asks Licking County to ban large solar developments

Columbus Dispatch, January 19, 2024

The Etna Township Trustees took a step toward excluding large solar farm developments from coming into their township.

Etna Township Trustees Gary Burkholder and Mark Evans voted Tuesday to ask the Licking County Commissioners to prohibit utility-scale solar farms within the township. Trustee Rozland McKee voted against the request.

The matter is now turned over to the Licking County Commissioners. Etna doesn't have the authority to prohibit solar farms on its own. But through a state law passed in 2021, county commissioners have the authority to bar or limit development of wind farms that produce more than 5 megawatts and solar farms that produce more than 50 megawatts. Smaller solar fields can be subjected to local zoning.

Southwest District

Council on Aging offers input into enhancing the well-being of older adults

Wilmington News Journal, January 18, 2024

At Wednesday's Clinton County Commissioners meeting, Council on Aging (COA) representatives provided updates on various initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for older adults in the community.

Ken Wilson, vice president of program operations for COA, and Judy Eschmann, vice president of community and new business operations for COA, addressed the commissioners, shedding light on the progress made since their last visit. COA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting choice, independence, dignity, and well-being for older adults, people with disabilities, and their families.

One of the updates involved the ongoing efforts to address the technological needs of older adults. Wilson emphasized the importance of technology in people's lives and the growing need for assistance in setting up devices. COA has been exploring the possibility of partnering with a company from the Youngstown area to provide a "geek squad" for older adults in southwestern Ohio.

Wilson highlighted the challenges faced by older adults in adapting to the evolving nature of technology, noting that services like utility assistance and internet access are becoming increasingly crucial.

Southeast District

Officials discuss housing issues in Washington County

WTAP.com, January 17, 2024

Marietta city officials joined the Washington County Commission to discuss potential solutions for the housing issues in the county.

Commissioner James Booth says the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Housing's recent visit to the area spotlighted the county's housing needs.

With the added attention, tiny home developer "Aqua Legacy" met with representatives to see if they could fit in to the solution.

Booth said these were preliminary conversations with no form of commitment on the part of the city or the county.

"The city sees it as something that could take care of some properties that may be vacant at this point or in an opportunity zone, and I'd let the city speak to what they'd like to do within the county. My opinion is I'd kind of need to see how that's working at that point before the county would get involved. Again, I don't think county government should be in competition with private business, I'd rather see developers do this."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

JANUARY 26
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 9 - 14
NACo Legislative Conference

FEBRUARY 15
CCAO General Government Committee Meeting

FEBRUARY 16
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 19
Presidents Day

DID YOU KNOW?

Back to Top

Space Exploration

Wednesday evening, the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board and the Capitol Square Foundation will unveil the first large-scale commissioned painting in the Statehouse Rotunda in 66 years: "Ohioans in Space." The painting honors space pioneers from Ohio, including John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, Jim Lovell, Judith Resnik, Gene Kranz, and more than 20 other Ohio astronauts.

Ohio continues to play a key role in space exploration, due in large part to the John Glenn Research Center in Cuyahoga County and the Neil Armstrong Test Facility in Erie County. The two sites are home to several important components of the ongoing Artemis Program, which aims to return a human presence to the Moon (Artemis was a Greek goddess often associated with the Moon; the earlier Moon program, Apollo, was named after her twin brother).

The Artemis program has had one successful test, and its first manned test flight is currently scheduled for late 2025, with the first lunar landing currently scheduled for late 2026.

You can learn more about Ohio's role in the Artemis Program on NASA's website.

A preliminary rendering of the Ohioans in Space mural set to be unveiled Wednesday evening.

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