February 5, 2024

Last week, Franklin County Commissioner Kevin Boyce testified before the US Senate Budget Committee on behalf of NACo. The hearing was titled *A Blueprint for Prosperity: Expanding Housing Affordability* and Commissioner Boyce lent his expertise after co-chairing NACo's Housing Task Force.

You can access Commissioner Boyce's written statement before the committee here and view a recording of the committee here. Commissioner Boyce delivers his statement, before the Q & A segment of the hearing, at the 44:00 mark in the video.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Ohio representative needed for NACo Board of Directors

Last week, Clermont County Commissioner David Painter resigned his seat on the NACo Board of Directors. CCAO will facilitate the selection of his replacement to represent Ohio member counties with our national association.

As you may recall, Commissioner Painter and Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman were elected to serve on the NACo Board during the CCAO Annual Membership Business Meeting at the CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference in December.

If you are interested in filling Commissioner Painter's unexpired term, please submit your letter of interest to CCAO Boards' Liaison and Events Manager Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org by end of day February 14. Letters of interests will be shared with the CCAO Board of Directors, and the Board will vote on an interim replacement February 16.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin.

Michael Linton named interim Hocking County Commissioner

Last Monday, the Hocking County Republican Party appointed Michael Linton to serve as an interim county commissioner in place of Hocking County Commissioner Jessica Dicken.

Linton, a board member on the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, will begin his term on February 8.

In January, a special commission appointed by Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy decided that Commissioner Dicken be suspended from public office due to her indictment on charges of misuse of Hocking County Agricultural Society funds while serving as the society's secretary.

Intermin Commissioner Linton will serve until Dicken is reinstated by appeal of the special commission's decision, by dismissal of her pending charges, or by a not guilty verdict upon trial. If Dicken is found guilty, Intermin Commissioner Linton will serve the remainder of her term, which will expire on December 31, 2026.

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.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner:

RUMPKE

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Next Generation 9-1-1 information available online

In preparation for the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1), the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) 9-1-1 Program Office has posted some helpful information on their website. During the summer and fall of 2023, the office hosted "roadshows" where they went over implementation information relative to NG 9-1-1. They recorded one of the roadshows and it is posted on their website for those that were unable to attend.

Additionally, they have forms that counties can use to create their 9-1-1 program review committee, forms to use for reporting PSAP expenditures, and an election form for counties to use to sign up to be selected as a future NG 9-1-1 site. As a reminder, the county 9-1-1 plan is due to the state 9-1-1 office on April 3, 2024 and expenditures from all PSAPs in the county are due by March 1, 2024.

If you have questions about any of these items, please reach out to the state 9-1-1 program review office or Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org or 740-503-6088.

Auditor of State issues bulletin on historical cost estimate calculations for capital assets

Last week, Auditor of State Keith Faber issued Bulletin 2024-001, regarding using the consumer price index (CPI) to estimate historical costs of capital assets.

The bulletin, accessible here, provides a guide on how political subdivisions which use the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for their fiscal reporting can calculate the historical cost of a capital asset, as may sometimes be required.

As noted in the bulletin, it is important to remember that the base year for these calculations is 1967, whereas the base year for calculations pertaining to local government official compensation changes is 1982.

If you have any questions regarding the information in the, please contact the Auditor of State's Local Government Services staff at (800) 345-2519 or contactlgs@ohioauditor.gov.

Rural Practice Incentive Program accepting applications for attorney loan forgiveness

Earlier in January, the Ohio Department of Higher Education announced the launch of the Rural Practice Incentive Program. The program, authorized under House Bill 150 of the 134th General Assembly, provides loan repayment on behalf of attorneys who have been licensed for eight or fewer years and who are employed by any of the following:

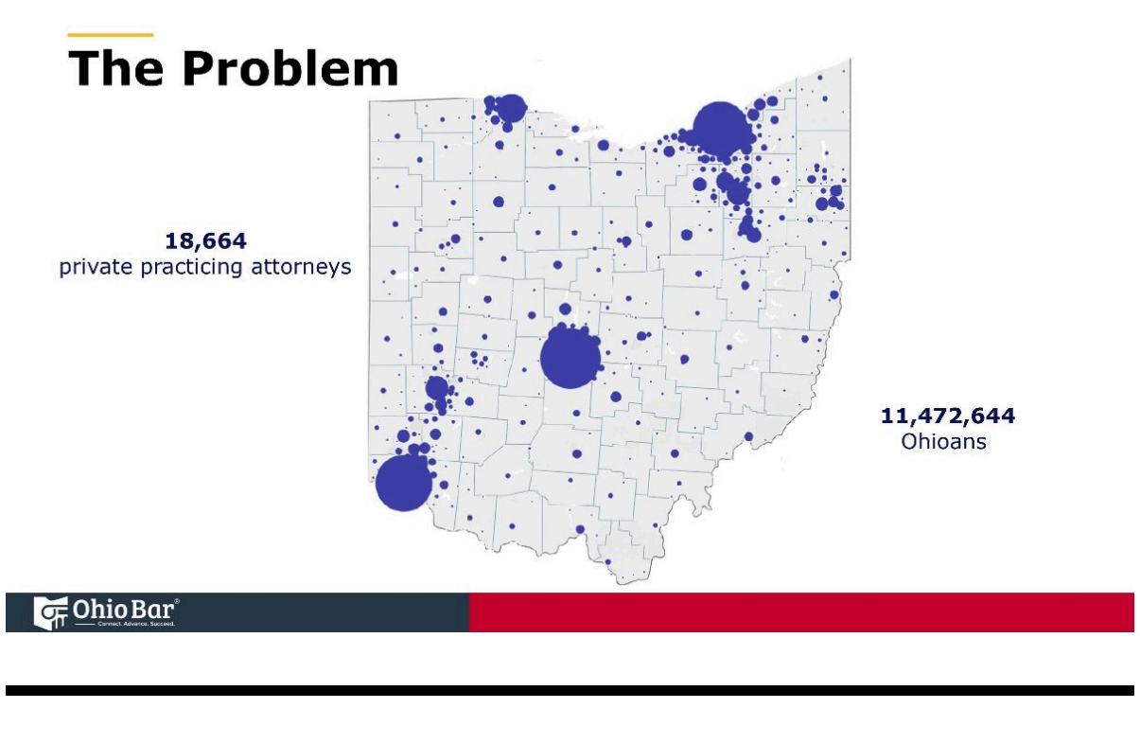
- The state public defender;
- A county prosecuting attorney;
- A county public defender commission;
- A joint county public defender commission; or
- Those who work as appointed counsel, provided they work in underserved communities for at least 520 hours each year.

One of the prime drivers of the indigent defense system cost is the lack of attorneys in rural areas of the state. The map at the end of this article highlights the uneven distribution of practicing attorneys across the state.

The Rural Practice Incentive Program will provide up to $10,000 a year of loan repayments for up to three years, with applicants having the ability to request a fourth and fifth year of repayment.

Applications are due under the program by March 15, so CCAO encourages counties to make this information available to attorneys in your area.

A full copy of the press release can be accessed here.



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 to host webinar with H2Ohio Program leaders

On Thursday, February 20, CCAO will be hosting a webinar regarding the H2Ohio Program, which received unprecedented funding levels in the most recent state operating budget. This funding will be distributed among four entities with the goal of reducing harmful algal blooms within the Western Lake Erie Basin and other water quality projects across the state through the new Rivers Initiative. Funding flows through the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Erie Commission. The Directors and their staff will be providing project updates along with funding opportunities throughout the current state fiscal year.

Speakers will include Director of Agriculture Brian Baldridge, a former Adams County Commissioner and CCAO Board of Directors member; OEPA Director Anne Vogel, one of the early architects of the H2Ohio Program; Lake Erie Commission Executive Director Joy Mulinex, who has worked on water quality issues pertaining to the Great Lakes for more than 25 years; and H2Ohio Wetlands Program Manager Eric Saas, who oversees the H2Ohio Program within the Department of Natural Resources.

You can register for the webinar here. If you are unable to, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO administrative professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627, and provide her with your email address. A recording of the webinar, along with copies of slides, will be posted on CCAO's webinar archive shortly after the event concludes.

OEPA to host water supply revolving loan program webinar

On February 8, the Ohio EPA will host a webinar to review updates and what is new for the Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) program as it approaches its 2025 program year.

The WSRLA offers low-interest loan funds for a variety of public drinking water system needs. The webinar will provide an update on activities and priorities of the program as well as highlight changes to the nomination process.

Registration 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.

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.

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

Ottawa County joins multi-county program to benefit foster children

The Beacon, January 30, 2024

In January 2022, the Departments of Job & Family Services (DJFS) in Seneca, Sandusky and Wyandot counties collaborated with the Mental Health Services Board of Seneca, Ottawa, Sandusky & Wyandot Counties (MHRSB) to create the Tiered Treatment Foster Home Program in an effort to better serve local children in foster care.

Now, Ottawa County has joined the program as well.

There is a strong need for family foster homes across all four counties, but there is a particular lack of treatment foster homes. While family foster homes offer placements for children in need of short-term or long-term, temporary care, treatment foster homes serve children with more complex needs, including behavioral, mental health or physical concerns. Treatment home foster parents are required to undergo additional, specialized training to prepare them to meet the children's needs.

"Family foster homes don't have the training to deal with kids who have a lot of trauma. They've grown up knowing how to interact with their circumstances from the perspective of trauma," said Ottawa County DJFS Executive Director Stephanie Kowal.

Jenni Zaika, the Tiered Treatment Foster Home Program Lead for all four counties, works with currently licensed foster family homes to upgrade to therapeutic homes and recruit new homes. Prior to the program, parents wanting to become a treatment foster home had to go through private training.

Northeast District

Trumbull County looking for beehive inspector

The Vindicator, January 31, 2024

Trumbull County finds itself in a sticky situation as it has to find a licensed apiary inspector for approximately 121 registered bee hives across the county.

Commissioners are expected to vote on advertising for a registered apiary inspector, who will be responsible for inspecting bee hives for the 2024 bee season.

The county's former apiary inspector, James Perry, informed the county he would not continue to do hive inspections in 2024. Perry had been doing hive inspections for about four years.

"My wife and I are expected to move to Illinois this summer," Perry said. "I did not want to leave in the middle of the summer."

Perry, 77, has been beekeeping for approximately 40 years after his first wife's father introduced him to it.

"State law requires the county to have a registered apiary," county Human Resources Director Alexandra DeVengencie-Bush said during Tuesday's commissioner workshop.

Central District

County JFS reviews status of all things transportational

Perry Tribune, January 31, 2024

On Jan. 29, Perry County Job and Family Services (PCJFS) hosted a meeting at the Perry County Behavioral Health Activity Center regarding updates on public transportation matters.

Lisa Leckrone, the PCJFS mobility manager, started by clarifying the differences between Perry County Transit (PCT) and Mobility Management (PCMM). Essentially, PCT is part of PCJFS, which has the fleet and provides rides for the county.

PCMM is also part of PCJFS but handles the organizational parts, such as how to pay for the rides, getting people the best deal for transportation, solving difficulties that can arise depending on the passenger, etc.

Leckrone introduced Mason Dickerson, the new PCT manager. He started by giving some 2023 statistics for PCT. In 2023, PCT made over 50,000 trips, traveled 840,000 miles, and put together had drivers out for 38,000 hours on the road.

Dickerson went on to talk about projects PCT is working on. He started by discussing their location on State Street and the new additional room they're constructing. This add-on will be connected to the garage of the building and will provide a driver facility, locker room, dining room area, and restroom facilities. He explained this was needed due to the many employees working for PCT.

Southwest District

Commissioners OK $150K for Impact Prevention

Portsmouth Daily Times, January 26, 2024

The Scioto County Commissioners this week approved the second batch of funding for a program in local schools aimed at fighting the drug epidemic.

Approved was the second of a two-part funding package of $150,000 for Impact Prevention. Impact is in all but two of Scioto County's schools, according to the commissioners. It is a peer-led campaign to fight such things as: substance abuse, vaping, bullying, and more.

"When we first decided to support them they were in three of our schools, they are now in every school but two," said Commissioner Scottie Powell. "Essentially, they're teaching them peer-led prevention. … When you start talking to these kids, it's very sobering, but it's clear they have a heart to make an impact in our local schools."

In total, the program was funded with $300,000 from American Rescue Plan grants. This is the second year for Impact.

"When we met with them in December, we met with about 50 kids and it was just a privilege to be there and listen to these young people," said Commissioner Cathy Coleman. "They have so many mature concerns … and they were ready and willing to talk."

In addition to activities at their own schools, students from all districts meet for activities and to discuss what's working and what's not.

Southeast District

Coshocton County spending is up across the board. What does that mean for 2025?

Coshocton Tribune, February 1, 2024

While Coshocton County looks financially sound for 2024, next year might be a different story and Coshocton County commissioners want to be proactive where to comes to the county coffers.

Commissioners will meet with other elected county officials and appointed department heads Monday regarding financial projections for this year and next.

Commissioner Dane Shryock said some serious decisions will need to be made after they see how the first quarter this year shakes out.

"I don't want to say put the brakes on, but we're going to have to have some conversations that we're fiscally responsible for where we're at," Shryock said on the upcoming meeting.

Budget Director Robin Schonauer said the general fund for 2024 is estimated at $17.8 million with a general fund revenue of $18.3 million, it includes a $4.8 million carryover from 2023. The total for non-general fund divisions is $62.5 million, meaning a total county budget of around $80.3 million.

She said expenses are up across the board primarily due to inflation and the general rising costs of goods and services. Additionally, she said health insurance costs are up and the Coshocton County Sheriff's Office has been earmarked for new employees with anticipation of the Coshocton Justice Center opening before the end of the year.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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FEBRUARY 9 - 14
NACo Legislative Conference

FEBRUARY 15
CCAO General Government Committee Meeting

FEBRUARY 16
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 19
Presidents Day

MARCH 1
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 15
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

DID YOU KNOW?

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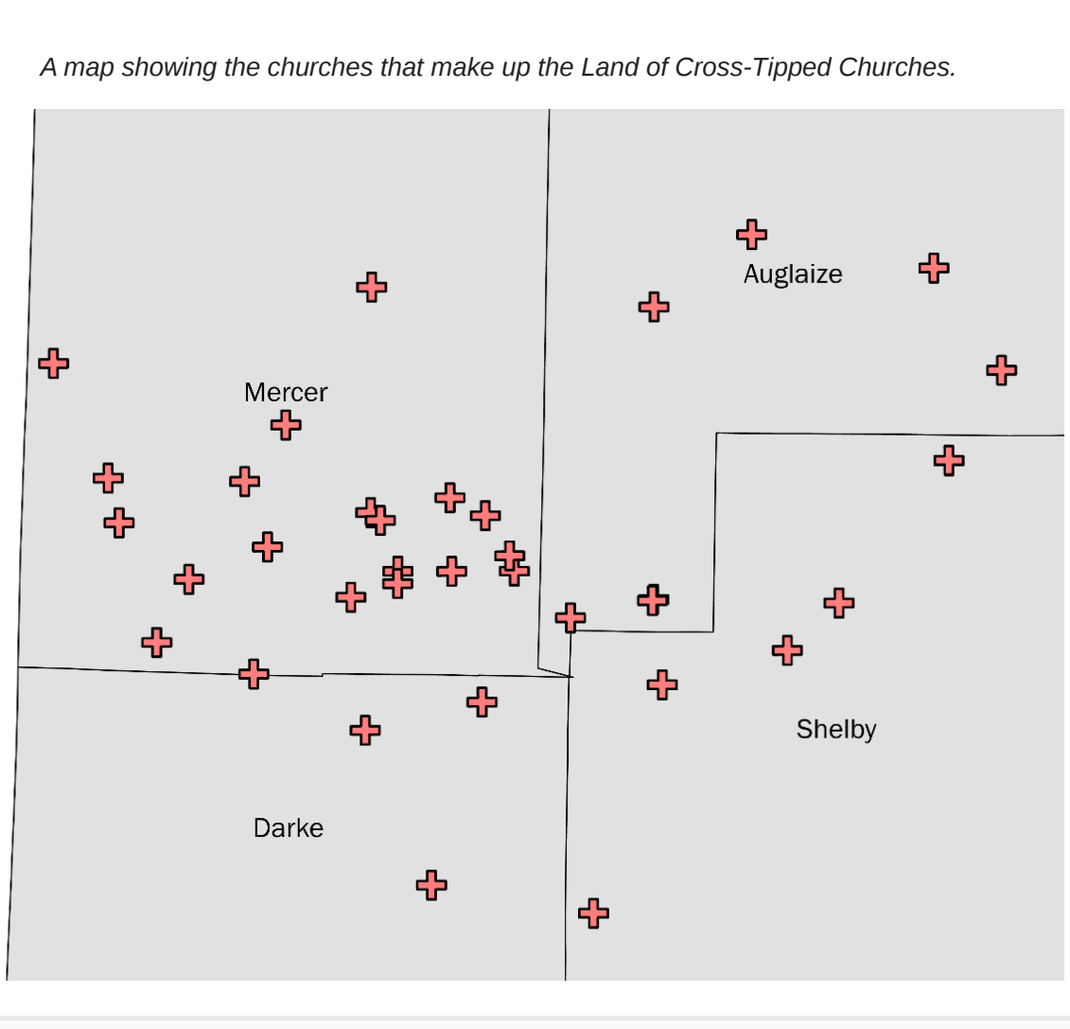
Mercer County

The "Land of Cross-Tipped Churches" is an area in western Ohio, concentrated in Mercer County but including Auglaize, Darke, and Shelby counties, with a dense concentration of Catholic churches. Many of the churches were constructed under the oversight of the Swiss missionary Francis de Sales Brunner and the Society of the Most Precious Blood, a society of secular clergy (a distinction from a monastic community).

Thirty-six of the churches in the Land of the Cross-Tipped Churches are on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Maria Stein Shrine in Maria Stein, a community in southeastern Mercer County. The Shrine is home to more than 1,200 Catholic relics (body parts of Catholic saints or pieces of important Catholic artifacts, such as the True Cross), making it one of the largest collections of relics in the United States.

You can learn more about the Land of Cross-Tipped Churches on its State Scenic Byway site.

A map showing the churches that make up the Land of Cross-Tipped Churches.



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