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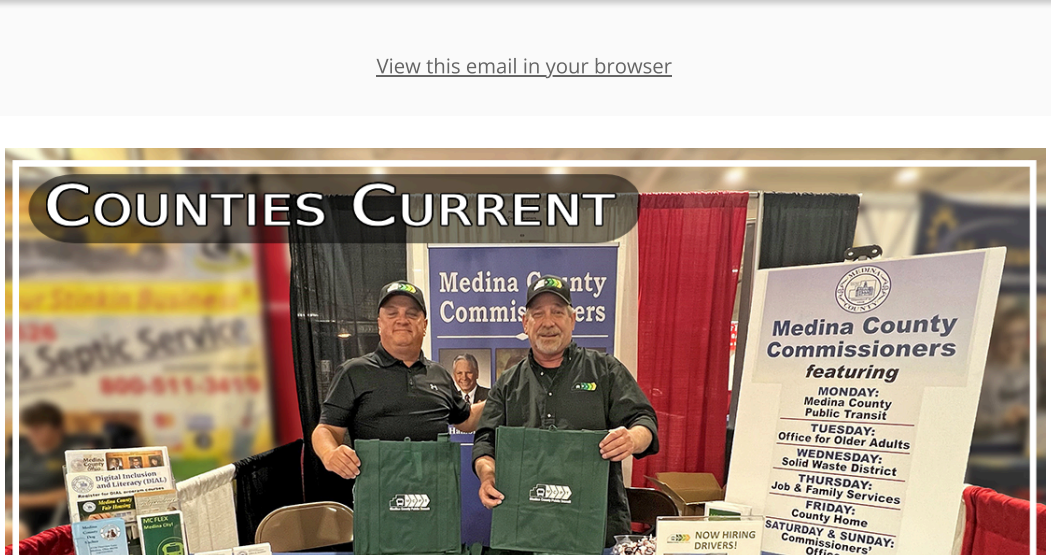
COUNTIES CURRENT
Medina County Commissioners
Medina County Commissioners featuring
MONDAY: Medina County Public Transit
TUESDAY: Office for Older Adults
WEDNESDAY: Solid Waste District
THURSDAY: Job & Family Services
FRIDAY: County Home
SATURDAY & SUNDAY: Commissioners' Office
NOW HIRING DRIVERS!
MEDINA COUNTY 1818

August 5, 2024

At last week's Medina County Fair, the board of commissioners highlighted a different agency under the commissioners' management. Monday's spotlight was on the county's public transit department.

Photo courtesy of Medina County

Association and Member News | State and Federal News |
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Job Postings

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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CCAO publishes CAB on Auditor of State fraud reporting training; all county staff must complete by September 28

All county commissioners, executives, council members, other county elected officials and all current county staff are required to complete a new, mandatory fraud reporting training through the Auditor of State's office by **September 28, 2024**. All public employees and elected officials are required to take the training once every 4 years.

Elected officials are unable to delegate this training to another employee and must complete the training themselves.

Any new county employees hired after September 28, 2024, must take the training within 30 days of the first day of employment and all elected officials must take the training within 30 days after taking office. The requirement is ongoing and training must be completed once every four years.

The training is a free, 8-minute video that is available on demand on the Auditor of State's website. Each elected official and county employee will register, watch the video, and then receive a certificate of completion. All certificates should be collected from employees and retained for audit.

A detailed explanation of these requirements is available in Auditor of State Bulletin 2024-005 and in CCAO's recently published CAB 2024-01 AOS Fraud Reporting Training.

The Auditor of State website includes FAQs and sample tools for tracking employee participation.

If you have questions regarding the training, you can contact the Auditor of State's office here.

Defiance County receives first funding from All Ohio Future Fund

Last week, the DeWine-Husted Administration announced that a project in Defiance County will be the first recipient of funding under the All Ohio Future Fund. The $14.6 million will assist in financing the construction of a water and wastewater/sewer extension and roadwork project within the existing Baltimore Avenue Industrial Corridor in Defiance.

The All-Ohio Future Fund was first announced during Governor DeWine's 2023 State of the State Address where he expressed the importance that every region within Ohio experiences the current economic revival. The General Assembly then allocated $750 million for the fund in the operating budget.

Applications are still open and will be on a rolling basis until funding is depleted. Eligible projects under the program include public roadwork, water and wastewater infrastructure, design and engineering, demolition, wetland mitigation, utility gap funding, and one-time site enhancements. Program guidelines stipulate that awardees must secure site occupants within five years.

If there are any questions regarding the All Ohio Future Fund, please reach out to Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck at jhoneck@ccao.org or Policy Analyst James Kennedy at jkennedy@ccao.org.

Counties, other local governments receive distributor and retail pharmacy settlement payments

In the last week, counties and other local governments were notified by BrownGreer, the national opioid settlement administrator, of several opioid settlement payments for those subdivisions that opted into the settlement agreements. The following payments were made in late July/early August:

- Distributor payment 4
- Allergen payment 1
- CVS payments 1 and 2
- Teva payment 1
- Walgreens payments 1 and 2
- Walmart payment 1

BrownGreer also distributed this spreadsheet showing allocations to the local governments, state, and OneOhio Recovery Foundation. The calculations spreadsheet is also available in the Beneficiary Portal. The settlement agreements can be found on nationalopioidofficialsettlement.com.

County engineer offices receive chloride runoff reduction grants

Last week, Governor Mike DeWine announced the awarding of $2.7 million to 52 communities as part of the H2Ohio Chloride Reduction Grant Program. The program is intended to help communities acquire equipment and storage areas to efficiently spread road salt during winter in a way that reduces chloride runoff into waterways.

Four county engineer offices received funds under this round of grants.

- Fairfield County: $74,652
- Henry County: $52,953
- Lucas County: $44,800
- Union County: $50,651

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

RUMPKE

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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SERB releases latest edition of Cost of Health Insurance report

Last week, the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) released its 2024 edition of the Annual Cost of Health Insurance in Ohio's Public Sector Report. The report is the result of surveying Ohio's public employers regarding health insurance, plan design, and the cost to governments.

Two notable high-level findings in the report are that medical premiums are growing faster than wages and faster than inflation. In 2024, average wages in Ohio's public sector grew by 3.2% while medical premiums grew by 5.9% (for single premiums) and 6.2% (for family premiums). The inflation rate for 2024 was 3.4%, also well below the premium growth rate.

The report contains many more valuable insights on more focused analyses, such as premium differences between different insurance plan types, coverage differences in prescription insurance, and more. CCAO encourages counties familiarize themselves with the report.

Ohio Grants Portal open for OTSCIF recipients

On Friday, the Office of Budget and Management announced that awardees under the One Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF) may register through the Ohio Grants Portal to access the funds granted through the capital budget process.

Counties that were awarded funds should ensure that they are registered through the Ohio Grants Portal, and we encourage counties to share this information with other local governments or community organizations that may have received funding through OTSCIF. The full list of OTSCIF awards can be found here.

If you have trouble registering or encounter other difficulties, please contact grants@obm.ohio.gov with questions.

Department of Aging to host Assisted Living Feedback forums across the state

Over the next month, the Department of Aging will be hosting eight Assisted Living Feedback Forums to foster communication between local leaders and community members regarding assisted living. The forums are structured in a similar way as the Nursing Home Quality and Accountability Task Force's listening sessions were, held last year. These forums will focus on another option for long-term care.

The first three events will occur this week. Two will held at the Ohio State University campus (one from 10:00 a.m. to noon and the other from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.) on Wednesday and the third will be held in Nelsonville from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Thursday. You can register for any of the eight events through this link.

The full schedule of events with addresses is below:

Columbus
Wednesday, August 7, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Ohio State University
Longaberger Alumni House
2200 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Nelsonville
Thursday, August 8, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
The Lodge at Hocking College
15770 OH-691, Nelsonville, Ohio 45764

Dayton
Tuesday, August 13, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Sinclair Community College
Conference Center – Charity Auditorium
444 W. Third St., Dayton, Ohio 45402

West Chester/Cincinnati
Wednesday, August 14, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
MidPointe Library West Chester
Conference Rooms A/B
9363 Centre Point Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069

Bowling Green
Tuesday, August 20, 2024
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wood County Senior Center
140 S. Grove St, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402

Youngstown
Thursday, August 29, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Youngstown State University
Kilcawley Center – Chestnut Room
117 Tressel Way, Youngstown, Ohio 44555

Cleveland
Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
The Conference Center at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
11890 Fairhill Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44120

Recreational marijuana sales expected to begin tomorrow; summary of current landscape

At last year's November election, Ohioans voted to enact Issue 2, a citizen-initiated statute that legalized adult use cannabis and created a regulatory structure for the new industry and an excise tax with a prescribed distribution formula. There have not been any legislative changes to the citizen-enacted statute, and, according to multiple news sources, some dispensaries will be certified to begin recreational sales tomorrow (August 6).

What Was Passed
The adult use cannabis provisions are established in Chapter 3780 of the Revised Code. Shortly after Issue 2 passed, CCAO published CAB 2023-06: Issue 2 Adult Use Cannabis. The CAB provides more detailed information about Chapter 3780's provisions, but this section will provide an overview of key sections to counties.

Counties have very little involvement in the adult use cannabis system. Sales are subject to the sales tax, so counties may see increased sales tax receipts depending on the volume of sales within their jurisdiction, and sales of adult use cannabis will increase the Local Government Fund as well. ***As an important note***, since it appears that some sales may occur next week and thus during the statewide Extended Sales Tax Holiday, sales on marijuana products are still being taxed. Marijuana products are on the list of products that are not eligible for the sales tax holiday.

Chapter 3780 gives municipalities and townships the authority to limit or prohibit adult use cannabis operators within their jurisdictions, but counties do not have a similar authority.

There is a 10% excise tax on sales that is distributed for four different purposes. These are a social equity and jobs fund administered by the Department of Development, a substance abuse and addiction fund administered by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, a "host community" fund which provides allocations to municipalities and townships with cannabis operators, and a small fund to support the operations of the Division of Cannabis Control.

When Does It Start?
The initiative is fully effective, but certain aspects of it have not yet begun due to administrative processes. For example, consuming cannabis products is legal, as is growing plants at home (within bounds set by the law).

Sales, however, have not yet begun. The Division of Cannabis Control has begun issuing dual licenses for operation of growers, processors, and testing labs. The dual licenses are necessary due to the different specifications that medical marijuana and recreational marijuana must meet.

While licenses for those facilities have been granted, there are no licensed recreational use dispensaries. Priority is being given to medical marijuana dispensaries to apply for "dual use" permits. These applications must be approved or rejected no later than September 7. There will not be a "Day 1" statewide; rather, licensed dispensaries will be able to start operating after they are approved. According to several news sources, the Division of Cannabis Control has notified some dispensaries that they can begin sales this Tuesday, but the Division has not given official confirmation.

According to data compiled by the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State University, as of July 19, there are 68 local jurisdictions that have enacted prohibitions on recreational marijuana operators. Some of these prohibitions are of indefinite length while others are for a specified length.

What Might Change?
Shortly after Issue 2 passed, the Governor and the General Assembly indicated interest in changing aspects of the statute. However, the House and the Senate have different approaches to amending Chapter 3780. Some unifying themes are providing a continuing revenue stream for county jail projects, dedicating funding to other public safety purposes, and retaining the applicability of the sales tax to recreational sales.

The Senate Plan
The Senate amended House Bill 86 (Representative Jeff LaRe) to include the chamber's plan for approaching adult use cannabis. One key change is the increase of the excise tax levied on adult use cannabis products to 15% (Chapter 3780 sets the rate at 10%). The Senate would distribute the revenue generated from the excise tax according to the following percentages, with a maximum distribution for each purpose:

- 28% (up to $80 million) – Grants through the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) for operating and/or construction cost for county jails.
  - DRC must use the jail funding formula included in the state operating budget to distribute grants.
  - This allocation sunsets after ten years.
  - After sunset, the 28% allocation will be distributed to the General Revenue Fund.
- 16% (up to $45 million) – To the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to fund peace officer training.
  - After five years, allocation increases to 19% (up to $55 million).
- 14% (up to $40 million) – To the Attorney General to fund law enforcement continuing education training costs.
  - Begins in 2026.
- 9% (up to $25 million) – To the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) to fund substance abuse treatment, prevention, and education programs.
  - After five years, allocation increases to 11% (up to $30 million).
- 9% (up to $25 million) – OMHAS to fund and administer the 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline.
- 5% (up to $15 million) – To the Attorney General to reimburse certain costs associated with expungement for marijuana possession offenses decriminalized by the bill.
  - Sunsets after five years.
- 5% (up to $15 million) – To the Division of Criminal Justice Services to fund local drug task forces.
- 5% (up to $15 million) – To fund safe driving programs administered by DPS.
- 4% (up to $13 million) – To DPS to pay the expenses of administering the Ohio Investigative Unit.
- 3% (up to $8 million) – To pay for administrative expenses of the Division of Marijuana Control.
- 2% (up to $5 million) – To the Department of Health to fund poison control centers.

Any revenue above each purposes' maximum allocation will be deposited into the General Revenue Fund. Functionally, this means that any revenue generated by the excise tax more than $286 million will go to the state GRF.

Subject to voter approval, counties have permissive authority to levy an additional 3% excise tax (in 0.25% increments) on adult use cannabis sales to support artistic, cultural, and entertainment opportunities.

The Senate plan makes any property used to cultivate adult use marijuana ineligible to be valued as CAUV. This is very similar to how current law views land used for medical marijuana.

A municipal corporation or township can prohibit, or limit the number of, adult use cannabis operators permitted within the boundaries of the subdivision, subject to certain limitations (R.C. 3780.25(A)).

The Senate plan will also limit the amount of dispensary licenses to 350 across the state of Ohio and prohibits a dispensary from being located within 500 feet of schools, churches, public libraries, or public playgrounds and parks.

The House Plan
The House's plan for adult use cannabis is House Bill 354 (Representative Jamie Callendar).

The House version keeps the 10% excise tax in Chapter 3780, along with a similar tax revenue distribution:

- 36% – Social Equity and Jobs Program, funded through the Department of Development.
  - Counties will run the programs and receive grants from Development (more information below).
- 36% – Host Community Cannabis Fund.
  - Distributed to municipalities and townships.
- 12.5% – 9-8-8 Suicide and Prevention Hotline, funded through OMHAS.
- 10% – Substance Abuse and Addiction Fund which aids county sheriffs in providing mental health services in county jails.
- 2.5% – Substance Abuse and Addiction Fund to support OMHAS in developing the state's mental health workforce.
- 3% – Division of Marijuana Control operations.

A provision not found in either Chapter 3780 or the Senate's plan is a 10% cultivators gross receipts tax. The House will allocate funding to county jails using the formula from contained in the operating budget, similar to the Senate's plan. The full allocation of the cultivators' gross receipts tax is as follows:

- 36% – Adult Use Cannabis Local Jail Fund
- 36% – Adult Use Cannabis County Sheriff Fund
- 23% – Adult Use Cannabis Law Enforcement Training Fund
- 5% – Crime Victims Assistant Fund

The House plan mirrors the Senate plan's provisions regarding cultivation land being ineligible for CAUV and siting restrictions within 500 feet of certain locations. Unlike the Senate plan, however, the House does not limit the number of dispensaries that can operate statewide.

One significant change that counties should be aware of in the House plan is an adjustment of the Social Equity and Jobs Program established in Chapter 3780. The chapter gave the Department of Development the primary responsibility of developing and administering the program across the state.

Under HB 354, these responsibilities will now be under the board of county commissioners in each county or a designed a department, board, commission, or agency.

The county's responsibilities under the program include the following:

- Individuals wanting certification will apply to the county once the county establishes procedures.
- Counties will certify cannabis social equity and jobs program applicants in accordance with rules developed under the Dept. of Development.
- Grants will be provided to counties for the following program purposes:
  - Financial assistance;
  - Loans;
  - Grants;
  - Technical assistance.
- Grant funding may also be used by a county for the following:
  - Community engagement;
  - Economic development;
  - Social programming.

In Review
Adult use cannabis sales appear likely to begin next week and will expand as the Division of Cannabis Control approves more licenses as the year continues. Under current law, counties where sales occur will receive sales tax revenue and the Local Government Fund may see an increase.

Changes to the adult use cannabis law are still being discussed in the Statehouse and around Capitol Square. CCAO will continue to work with the Governor's Office and both chambers of the legislature to ensure that any change to the excise tax revenue distribution includes funding for vital public safety purposes, particularly ongoing funding to keep county jails safe, secure, and able to meet the needs of growing populations of inmates who need mental health care and drug addiction treatment.

If you have any questions concerning recreational marijuana law, please contact the CCAO Policy Team at policy@ccao.org.

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 hold Public Works Commission webinar on August 29

Later this month, on August 29, CCAO will host a webinar focusing on the Ohio Public Works Commission. The webinar will provide an overview of OPWC's infrastructure bond program, a grant and loan program that has been benefiting Ohio's local governments since 1988. The program's funding source must be reauthorized by voters every ten years and the current reauthorization period is coming to an end. The presentation will examine the history of reauthorization and the required process to put the issue on a forthcoming statewide ballot.

Linda Bailiff, Executive Director of OPWC, will give the presentation and be available to answer questions.

You can register for the webinar here. If you are encounter issues registering with the link, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO Administrative Professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627, and provide her with your email address.

Local government cybersecurity grants available

CyberOhio, an initiative by the state to bolster cybersecurity in Ohio, has announced the opening of two grant opportunities for local governments.

First, the Cybersecurity Software and Services Grant is intended to assist local governments in acquiring security software and services. Examples include implementing multi-factor authentication, server protection programs, and more. Grants can be up to $20,000.

The second program is the .gov Migration Grant. This grant program is intended to assist local governments transition their websites and emails to the ".gov" type. This domain type is only available to U.S.-based government entities, allowing users to have more confidence that they are receiving genuine information and that the emails they may receive from government entities are legitimate. Grants under this program may be up to $9,500.

Applications for both programs are open until September 16. CCAO encourages counties to consider applying for these funds as the threat of cyber attacks will only increase going forward.

H2Ohio 2024 Conservation Ditch Grant Program webinar recording available

In late July, the Ohio Department of Agriculture held a webinar to give county officials an overview of the 2024 H2Ohio Conservation Ditch Grant Program. The recording of the webinar is now available on the Department's YouTube page.

The application period begins on August 1 and ends on October 31.

Some key facts about the program:

1. Only county engineer offices and SWCDs may apply.
2. Projects must be self-forming or two-stage ditch designs.
3. Grant funds will not be distributed to grantee until after construction and placed on the maintenance program.
4. This is a competitive grant program and approved projects will be announced in December.

OLBA to host small county land bank summit in October

On October 3, the Ohio Land Bank Association (OLBA) will be hosting its inaugural Fall Land Bank Summit. The summit will focus on rural, small, and recently created land banks to helpful tools and provide training to new staff members.

The summit will be held in Mount Vernon. More information, including how to register and an event schedule, can be found on the OLBA's website.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One story from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

Northwest District

County learns about local bees

Advertiser Tribune, August 2, 2024

Seneca County Apiary Inspector Barrett Zimmerman attended the Aug. 1 Seneca County Commissioners' meeting to discuss his efforts to support local beekeepers and help keep bees healthy. Zimmerman was hired as the county's apiary inspector this year.

There are about 90 apiaries and 700 colonies in Seneca County. The Ohio Department of Agriculture requires that all apiaries register with the state, and Zimmerman encourages beekeepers to register to protect their bees. Unless they opt out by signing a no-consent form, registered apiaries in the county are inspected by Zimmerman, who looks for diseases and pests that could damage or destroy a colony.

The importance of Zimmerman's work became startlingly apparent when he discovered American Foulbrood (AFB), the most dangerous disease threat to bee colonies, in Seneca County this week. AFB is caused by spore-forming bacteria that can live 70 years. There is no cure, and the disease can only be managed by burning the colony.

"It's really scary. It's the most deadly disease," Zimmerman said. "If we didn't have an inspector, we wouldn't have found it."

Northeast District

Columbiana County commissioners laud DJFS for clean audit

The Review, August 1, 2024

Columbiana County Commissioner Tim Weigle congratulated the Department of Job and Family Services Wednesday on the clean results of a recent financial audit, with no issues or findings for recovery.

"It shows me that my team is diligent and we've been good stewards of taxpayer dollars, making sure needs are met where we can and current allocations are being used for that purpose," county DJFS Director Rachel Ketterman said.

The financial audit looked at federal dollars spent in all three divisions, Child Support Enforcement, Public Assistance and Children Services.

In other DJFS-related business, the commissioners granted authority to Ketterman to trade in three 2013 vehicles, including two Ford Fusions and a Dodge Caravan, toward the purchase of three new 2025 Ford Explorers. Ketterman said the old vehicles have well over 150,000 miles on them.

Central District

Commissioners discuss deer hunt for vets, website updates, more

Perry County Tribune, July 31, 2024

On Wednesday, July 24 the Perry County commissioners — Ben Carpenter, Scott Owen, and Dan Kinsel — met to discuss a number of issues affecting the county.

Chuck Byers, a former principal at New Lexington High School, Miller High School, and other schools, brought the GRIT Project (Growing Rural Independence Together) before the commissioners and discussed the work this project has been doing through Perry and several other counties in Southern Ohio.

GRIT is a project formed through the Future Plans nonprofit that works with several organizations including schools, Job and Family Services and Ohio Means Jobs. This project provides assessments to match skill sets and soft skills to jobs, as well as helping people build resumés, and do job searches. These projects and this nonprofit are supported with state funding and grant money.

The county website is going through a series of changes. Representatives of the Lancaster marketing agency Madison and Fifth were welcomed into the meeting room, where they provided a rundown of the design aspect for the updated website. This new design includes photos of Perry County that will be changed through the different seasons, more information and news about the county, and more of a "hometown feel" than there would be to a regular business page.

Southwest District

Consolidating Butler County offices inching closer to reality

Journal News, July 28, 2024

Butler County is making headway on a decade-long idea to consolidate county-owned facilities and make things more convenient for taxpayers.

The main hub for county government is the Government Services Center but there are separate buildings for the Board of Elections, Children Services, Developmental Disabilities, Care Facility, county engineer, health department, the Juvenile Justice System, the Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Board, the morgue, OhioMeansJobs and the Probate and Area Courts and the Administrative Center. The sheriff's office also has three jail facilities and the dispatch center.

The county needs many of these separate facilities because there isn't room in the Government Services Center in downtown Hamilton for everything.

The plan is to empty the old Administration Center at 130 High Street, moving the county auditor and recorder's office into the Government Services Center and the development and water and sewer departments to the former Developmental Disabilities Board adult daycare center on Liberty-Fairfield Road and Ohio 4.

Southeast District

After more than a decade of advocacy, a majority of injection wells in Athens County are suspended

Ohio Capital Journal, July 31, 2024

After sounding the alarm on fracking waste injection wells for more than a decade, Roxanne Groff from Athens County is now finally starting to see some of the fruits of her and her friends' labor.

A handful of Athens County injection wells were suspended after Ohio Department of Natural Resources determined they pose an "imminent danger to the health and safety of the public and is likely to result in immediate substantial damage to the natural resources of the state," according to letters from Chief of the Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management Eric Vendel.

"I cried," the 75-year-old activist said when she heard the news.

Groff's advocacy against injection wells started back in 2012 with the Hazel–Ginsburg well. It has since grown to include many Southeast Ohio residents who are also sounding the alarm — something Groff believes helped led to the wells being suspended.

"All of us together, all of the community members stood up for themselves and pushed back," Groff said. "We know that this is dangerous."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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AUGUST 16
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 21
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 21 - 23
CCAO Summer Symposium - Hocking Hills

AUGUST 23
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 29
CCAO Webinar: Public Works Commission Update

BY SEPTEMBER 28
County elected officials and employees must take Fraud Reporting training

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