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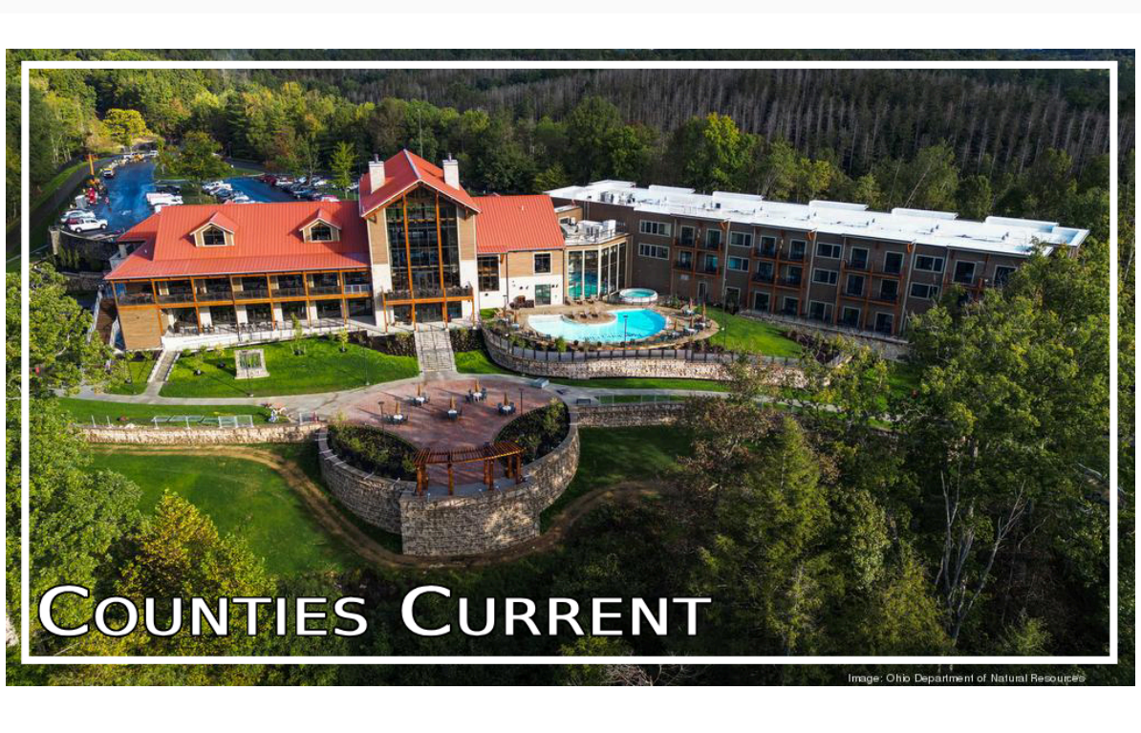

August 19, 2024

We're looking forward to seeing you at the 2024 CCAO Summer Symposium this week, held at the Hocking Hills State Park Lodge & Conference Center!

The full agenda for the event is available here.

Association and Member News | State and Federal News |
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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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A Swing for Scholarships: 2nd Annual County Classic Golf Outing

On July 19, under the warm midsummer sun, the 2nd Annual County Classic Golf Outing brought together golf enthusiasts, Commissioners and other leaders for a day that perfectly blended sport and purpose. The event, with its picturesque fairways and the enticing aroma of a delicious lunch spread, was a resounding success. Participants were not just swinging their clubs; they were swinging for scholarships, with proceeds benefiting the Scholarship Fund for the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation.

A Swing for a Cause

The essence of the County Classic Golf Outing lies in its dedication to the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation Scholarship Fund. With each stroke of the club, participants directly contributed to the future of promising students throughout Ohio. This year, the Foundation proudly awarded five deserving students with $2,000 scholarships, empowering them to pursue their academic endeavors and shape the leaders of tomorrow.

The 2024 County Classic Champions were Sean Dunn, David Salisbury, Jimmy Wolf and Andrew Huffman from Sean P. Dunn and Associates. Over the past two years, the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation has awarded $20,000 in scholarships to high school students across Ohio who seek a career in public service.

The success of this year's outing promises even greater things for the future. As the sun set on a day filled with camaraderie and purpose, participants left with a sense of accomplishment, knowing they had contributed to a brighter future for Ohio's students. Here's to another year of swinging for scholarships and making a meaningful impact!

The 2024 County Classic Champions!

Special election reimbursement request to be reviewed by Controlling Board

Later today, the Secretary of State will request the Controlling Board to transfer appropriations totaling $950,937 to the Secretary in order to reimburse counties for election expenses incurred during the 6th Congressional District Special Election, both the primary (held on March 19) and the general (held on June 11).

The Revised Code requires the state to pay all the costs associated with any special elections to fill a vacancy in the U.S. House of Representatives. Since this is a statutory requirement, CCAO anticipates the Controlling Board will approve the appropriation transfer.

Payments to the 11 counties in the 6th Congressional District total as follows:

- Belmont - $82,309.28
- Carroll - $21,554.82
- Columbiana - $97,981.38
- Harrison - $27,592.95
- Jefferson - $107,982.14
- Mahoning - $273,791.76
- Monroe - $32,938.97
- Noble - $37,556.26
- Stark - $172,394.81
- Tuscarawas - $53,089.30
- Washington - $43,745.70

If you are one of the affected counties and have questions about the payment, please contact Leslie Piatt, Chief Financial Officer for the Secretary of State, at lpiatt@ohiosos.gov.

REMINDER: All county staff must complete fraud reporting training 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.

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.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

JobsOhio
Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Updates regarding SNAP benefits

This month, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has issued two releases regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Please ensure that your county department overseeing SNAP circulates this information to your county's residents.

Replacement Benefits Extension

First, on Friday, ODJFS announced that it had secured a federal waiver to extend the deadline for applying for SNAP replacement benefits to September 5 for those SNAP recipients who may have been affected by the widespread power outages in NE Ohio. This extension applies to those in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull counties.

Households that lose food purchased with SNAP benefits due to a power outage of four hours or more can apply to receive replacement SNAP benefits for the amount of food the household lost, as long as it does not exceed their monthly allotment.

With this change, impacted households now have up to 30 days after the loss to complete JFS Form 07222 submit it to their County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS). The CDJFS will have to verify the extended power outage before replacing benefits. Households should be prepared to provide verification of the extended power outage. This includes screenshots of news reports, text or email alerts, or outage maps that show their specific area was without power for four hours or more.

SNAP Fraud

The other release from ODJFS occurred earlier this month and concerns SNAP fraud. Criminals have increasingly used a process called "skimming" to steal EBT card numbers. This is when a fraudulent device is placed over a point-of-sale card reader to steal payment card information. When a recipient swipes their card over a compromised device, they are unsuspectingly sharing their card information with criminals.

Tips to avoid skimmer devices:

- Do not use the card reader if you notice anything unusual.
- Pull at the edges of the keypad before swiping your EBT card to ensure there is nothing over the reader.
- Notify store staff if you notice anything suspicious with the card reader.

Individuals who have had their SNAP benefits stolen electronically can seek reimbursement by contacting their County Department of Job and Family Services.

Governor launches statewide PSA campaign on volunteer firefighting

On Friday, Governor Mike DeWine, Director of the Department of Commerce Sherry Maxfield, and State Fire Marshal Kevin Reardon announced the launch of a statewide public service announcement campaign to raise awareness of the need for volunteer firefighters.

The campaign is one of the recommendations made by the Volunteer Fire Service Task Force that the governor created in 2022. Ottawa County Commissioner Mark Stahl, himself a volunteer firefighter, was one of the members of the Task Force.

You can view the full Task Force's report here.

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.

You can register for any of the remaining events through this link.

The full schedule of events with addresses is below:

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

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.

Registration open for housing forum in Allen County; hosted by Ohio REALTORS, Bricker Graydon, and CCAO

Next Wednesday (August 28), CCAO is partnering with Bricker Graydon LLP and Ohio REALTORS to host a discussion on collaborative solutions for Ohio's housing crisis in Lima.

The event is free but space is limited, so please register by August 21.

This session will first frame the issue of Ohio's housing market – both positives and negatives – focusing on trends in the construction of new housing units and market conditions in the sale and leasing activity of existing products. Attention will then turn to the "How?", "What?", and "Why?" of local communities getting involved in planning, zoning, and other regulatory activities, and fostering housing development transactions to help prime the pump of housing solutions within their markets.

More information, including the registration link, can be found here.

The three organizations are working on scheduling additional forums in other parts of the state. CCAO will provide more information regarding those events as details become available.

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.

NACo launches course to develop artificial intelligence knowledge among county leaders

The NACo AI Leadership Academy is an innovative, completely online 6-week program created to equip frontline county government leaders with the knowledge and tools they need to understand and utilize AI to create higher levels of operational efficiency, organizational effectiveness and value for those they serve.

This robust curriculum, developed by the Professional Development Academy in partnership with NACo, provides lessons and insights from highly effective government leaders, proven industry executives, researchers and professors from top universities and subject matter experts. These professionals, along with an online Leadership Coach, address pressing issues facing county leaders today: understanding the power of AI, mitigating the risk of AI and navigating the complexity of cascading change occurring because of AI.

The leadership coaches facilitating this program will demystify AI with practical, relevant and immediately actionable cases, frameworks and tools for existing and emerging leaders in government. The work of government leaders has never been more challenging. This program addresses the challenge head-on and provides participants with engaging content that will increase confidence to lead with AI for good governance.

The course costs $595 pfor member counties, but discounts and scholarships may be available. The course will run from November 4 to December 20.

If you are interested in signing up yourself or staff members, you can do so by requesting more information here.

Local government cybersecurity grants available

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

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.

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

Individuals appointed by court replace Lucas County commissioners to vote on Ten Mile Creek petition

The Toledo Blade, August 13, 2024

Two court-appointed individuals voted in place of Lucas County commissioners Tuesday and delayed until March the final hearing for the Ten Mile Creek project after commissioners recused themselves because of possible conflicts of interest.

Commissioners Pete Gerken, Lisa Sobecki, and Anita Lopez own property in the Ten Mile Creek project area and could not vote because of state law, said John Borell, a Lucas County prosecutor.

"There is a specific statute that requires this," Mr. Borell said. "It only applies to ditches. The statute provides that if the commissioners are going to benefit from a project, replacements must be appointed by the common pleas court."

Mr. Borell said the process of having the court appoint replacements to vote for the elected county commissioners is unusual.

"I've been practicing for over 50 years," he said. "This is the first time I've seen this because joint district ditch projects are not common in Lucas County. There are probably more joint county ditches in rural areas of the state in which this may have happened."

On June 27, a Lucas County Common Pleas Court committee appointed residents Adam Hoff, David Bench, and Sandy Bihn to stand in for the three Lucas County commissioners on the Ten Mile Creek petition. The order was signed by Judge Linda Jennings, the presiding judge of the court of common pleas, Mr. Borell said.

At the start of the commissioners' meeting Tuesday, Mr. Hoff said he and Mr. Bench, with Ms. Bihn not present, were serving as acting commissioners for the purpose of the hearing.

"Only the county commissioners own property within the watershed that is affected by the project. So we're here in their place for just the purpose of the hearing," Mr. Hoff said.

Northeast District

Mahoning Co. Commissioners pass housing assistance resolution

WFMJ, August 14, 2024

The Mahoning County Commissioners passed language Wednesday on low to moderate-income housing in the county, through The Department of Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan.

The commissioners voted in favor of the grant management through the Community Development Block Grant and Community Housing Improvement Program.

The funding focuses on anti-displacement situations or demolition projects supporting low to moderate-income people. The commissioner's office explained this is meant to sustain housing and maintain the number of blighted homes in the region.

"Within those structures, there is a possibility that a person could be displaced or there could be demolition of a housing unit," explained Anna DeAscentis, Director of Grants Management with Mahoning County Commissioners. "And all of those funds go to support low to moderate-income people. Would we demolish or displace a person, we will take steps to make sure we maintain enough low to moderate-income housing within the county."

Central District

How an Ohio sheriff's agency is helping train therapy dogs nationwide

NBC4i, August 16, 2024

The first law enforcement agency to use therapy dogs in Ohio is now helping departments across the country establish their own programs.

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office started a therapy dog program in 2017, after Deputy Darrah Metz urged the department to get its first therapy dog: Mattis K. Nine. Mattis was also the first law enforcement therapy dog in Ohio and the sixth in the nation.

"We have wonderful dogs that we use for the bad guys, whether it's sniffing out drugs or bombs, explosives, suspect apprehension, tracking and trailing," Metz said. "But we didn't really have anything focused on the good guys, which are the people that we serve — victims of crime. So that's how the therapy dogs all came about."

The sheriff's office has one sworn-in therapy dog, Sunny, and two new puppies in training, Mando and Brook. Mattis died in late July from end-stage liver failure, but his legacy lives on through the expanding program. In the beginning, Metz said Mattis was mostly used to help the sheriff's office connect with the community – but an inquiry from the FBI changed the course of the program.

Southwest District

Ross County officials announce $1.3 million 2205 property tax cut

Scioto Post, August 12, 2024

Local officials today announced that Ross County will cut its general fund property tax levy rate rate by 22% next year, from 3.1 mills to 2.4 to provide tax relief for Ross County citizens. This follows months of historical budget research, projections and planning across departments and equates to roughly $1.3 million in 2025 tax savings for Ross County property owners and is renewable annually based on future County financial conditions. The planned reduction represents Ross County's first direct tax relief measure in nearly twenty years.

"All three Commissioners supported this plan because it's the right move for our citizens and a positive step," said Commissioner Jack Everson. "The goal is to provide sustainable value in terms of financial stability and critical infrastructure. Today's decision means next year we'll do it at a lower cost to taxpayers."

Treasurer David Jeffers and Auditor Jeff Lehner, members of Ross County's Budget Commission, agreed. "I fully support today's action as it reflects our commitment to easing financial burdens on our residents while maintaining services and supporting our community's growth," Jeffers said. Lehner added: "Tax cuts and balanced budgets are the way to keep local government from getting too fat. Today marks another milestone in our ongoing efforts toward greater efficiency."

Southeast District

Gallia County (Ohio) Commission approves Community Reinvestment Act legislation for county

WVNews, August 7, 2024

The Gallia County Commission met in regular session Thursday. The commissioners heard several updates and gave approval to the adoption of a commercial/industrial property tax abatement program in the county.

Commission President Jay Stapleton, Vice President Leslie Henry, and Commissioner David Smith attended. Also present were County Administrator Brian Rutherford, Grant Administrator Karen Sprague, Special Projects Manager Tom White, Commission Clerk Amanda Phillips and Commission Assistant Janie Peck.

The commission voted to approve the adoption of Community Reinvestment Act legislation in the county.

On July 11, the commission and members of the community were given a presentation on the proposed Community Reinvestment Act by Cole Massie, director of Economic Development for the University of Rio Grande and Gallia County.

Massie cited the numerous obstacles in the market for the county. Those challenges include ongoing population loss, residents being priced out of the home buying market, employment being concentrated in too few sectors, declining school enrollment, and aggressive incentive programs in larger cities and in West Virginia.

In his presentation, Massie highlighted several windows of opportunity to reverse the county's direction. Those opportunities include $15.4 billion in new industrial development and 5,000 new jobs within 60 miles of the county.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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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

SEPTEMBER 2
Labor Day

SEPTEMBER 13
CORSA Annual Meeting

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

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