October 7, 2024

Last week, during her 2024 State of the County speech, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro stressed the importance of collaboration with federal, state, and local partners.

Photo by Shane Wynn

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Former Mahoning County Commissioner David Ludt passes away

On Wednesday, September 25, former Mahoning County Commissioner David Ludt passed away at the age of 84.

David served in the Army Special Forces as a Green Beret and in the 82nd Airborne Division. After his service in the armed forces, he served as a Poland Township Trustee and as Mahoning County Commissioner.

You can read David's full obituary here.

Due Friday: Stepping Up Initiative coordinator survey

As many of you know, the Stepping Up initiative has been active in Ohio since 2015. During this time, the initiative has worked to reduce the number of people with mental illness in Ohio's jails. As with any program, they are continually looking to evaluate and improve the program in the state. To that end, they are currently working on an updated evaluation of the program.

The last evaluation occurred in 2021, when 54 counties participated in the initiative. Updating the evaluation will help determine the program's impact in all participating counties and help the staff determine what services and resources are still needed going forward.

The survey was sent directly to your Stepping Up County Coordinator; ***only they can respond***. The link above contains the contact information for each county coordinator, so please follow up with them if you have any questions.

It is important to note that your Stepping Up County Coordinator will require assistance and information from several members of your County Stepping Up Committee, if you have one, including staff from your jail, Common Pleas Court, Municipal Court, Probate Court, treatment providers, housing providers, and mental health and substance abuse services board.

We have linked a copy of the Stepping Up 2024 questionnaire to facilitate the gathering of information from the persons who represent their respective areas, as noted above. Specifically, there are the following number of questions covering these topics:

- 13 general questions
- 29 questions geared towards jail and/or law enforcement
- 4 questions for the Municipal and Common Pleas Courts and probation
- 3 Probate Court questions
- 7 questions on the crisis continuum
- 9 questions on projects, improvements, and challenges

The questionnaire must be completed by **Friday, October 11**. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Melissa Burek at mwburek@bgsu.edu or 419-372-9542.

If you are not a Stepping Up County and are interested in learning more about the initiative, please contact CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org or Stepping Up Ohio Project Director Eve Stratton at evelyn_stratton@yahoo.com.

Governor DeWine declares State of Emergency in four southern Ohio counties

The following is a news release from Governor Mike DeWine's office, with the beginning changed from "Today," to "Earlier this week,".

Earlier this week, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency for Lawrence, Jackson, Pike, and Scioto counties following severe weather on Friday, September 27, that caused high winds, flooding, power outages, and downed trees impacting roadways and residences.

"This declaration of a state of emergency will give the State the ability to expedite assistance to these communities," said Governor DeWine. "We will continue to monitor needs and help communities in Southern Ohio recover from the damage and remove large amounts of debris from the recent storm event."

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA) has been engaged with the impacted counties to assess needs and provide assistance. Ohio EMA continues to be in contact with the County Emergency Management Agencies (county EMAs) and will monitor developments and offer assistance.

Local governments who need assistance should contact their County Emergency Management Agency Offices.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

RUMPKE

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Attorney General Opinion on removal of squatters issued

Last week, Attorney General Dave Yost issued Attorney General Opinion (AGO) 2024-005 in response to a request from the Adams County Prosecutor.

The request concerns "squatting" and law enforcement's authority and potential liability to physically remove a squatter from a residence. The request and opinion define "squatting" as the act of physically entering and occupying a residence without the permission of the owner or lawful tenant to the exclusion of the owner or lawful tenant. This definition excludes a tenant who does not abide by an eviction or a resident of a foreclosed upon property who does not vacate.

The AGO notes that, while there is no statutory offense called "squatting," the elements of the definition used above constitute criminal trespass and potentially additional offenses if a fraudulent deed or lease are involved as well.

The AGO advises that law enforcement officers consider the unique circumstances of each situation before making a warrantless arrest. Criminal trespass is a misdemeanor; misdemeanors are generally only subject to warrantless arrests if the arresting officer can reasonably conclude from the circumstances that an offense has been committed.

The opinion states that warrantless entrance to the property is permitted if the owner or lawful tenant consents, since the individual trespass does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy while in another's property.

Finally, the Attorney General discusses potential liability incurred by law enforcement during the process of physically removing a squatter. He notes that the unique circumstances of each case will be the determining factor and that the AGO can only provide general guidance. Qualified immunity generally protects employees from civil action unless the action were outside the scope of the employee's official responsibilities; the acts were performed maliciously, in bad faith, or recklessly; or the Revised Code expressly imposes civil liability.

CCAO recommends that commissioners review the opinion with their county prosecutor and sheriff.

New SNAP program changes took effect on October 1

Two major Ohio Department of Job and Family Services changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) became effective on Tuesday.

The first change increases SNAP eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to mitigate the benefits cliff. Previously, SNAP was only available to those earning 130% FPL. ODJFS added tiered eligibility for those with income above the 130% threshold. As recipients' income approaches 200% FPL, their monthly SNAP benefits gradually decrease, creating an offramp from benefits instead of a cliff. A press release detailing this change can be found here.

Additionally, ODJFS launched the new SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) Program on Tuesday. The department convened a stakeholder group, including CCAO, to develop the redesign recommendations. The goals for redesigning the program were:

1. Meet local employer needs by providing employees with basic job readiness skills and work experience, and
2. Moving from a transactional to a transformational program by providing participants with case management, including coaching, goal setting, and barrier removal.

The recommendations for the redesign were:

1. Operate a voluntary program that gives priority of service to unemployed able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who opt to enroll and need help finding and keeping a job.
2. Focus on helping people become work-ready and understand basic job etiquette, as employers have been reluctant to work with the SNAP E&T program as it is currently structured.
3. Make it possible for more than just ABAWDs to have the opportunity to participate through a voluntary program.

The SNAP program requires ABAWDs to work 20 hours per week (an average of 80 hours per month) to receive assistance. Under the redesign, the SNAP E&T Program remains an option for ABAWDs to complete that requirement.

ODJFS released a one-page overview of the redesigned program. Additional information about the SNAP E&T program, including Q&As and a one-pager for SNAP participants, can be found on the SNAP E&T Program webpage of ODJFS' website.

CCAO appreciates the hard work of our county job and family services agencies in training to implement these programmatic changes.

If you have questions, please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@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.

Registration for Fairfield County Housing Forum closes Friday, event to be held following Friday

On October 18, BrickerGraydon, Ohio REALTORS, and CCAO will host a collaborative discussion on the future of housing in Ohio. The event will be held at the Wigwam Event Center in Pickerington and is free, but space is limited. ***Registration will close on this Friday, October 11***.

The program will feature speakers such as Lt. Governor Jon Husted, Fairfield County Commissioner Jeff Fix, CEO of One Columbus Kenny McDonald, and others.

Registration for the event can be completed here.

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

How George Washington's mistake led to Van Wert's name

WANE15, September 30, 2024

George Washington, the Father of America, was largely lauded for his decisions as a military general and president.

The voters showed as much—the only president to have been unanimously elected by the Electoral College still has his fingerprints all over the nation, but it was one of his mistakes that still lives on today in northwest Ohio.

"It's fascinating stuff that most of the locals probably don't know," said Thad Lichtensteiger, Van Wert County Commissioner.

Lichtensteiger's job is a constant reminder of Washington's mistake. Read his title again: "Van Wert County Commissioner."

If it weren't for a typo in 1780, his title would most likely read "Van Wart County Commissioner."

When being acknowledged for an award in the Revolutionary War, Militiaman Isaac Van Wart's name was misspelled with an "e" as "Wert" instead of "Wart" and it was entered into the congressional record incorrectly.

Northeast District

Commissioners delay vote on inmate phone contract

Tribune Chronicle, October 3, 2024

Trumbull County commissioners Wednesday delayed a vote awarding a two-year contract with Inmate Calling Solutions Inc. LLC to provide inmate telephones and financial transaction device equipment in the county jail due to questions brought by Commissioner Niki Frenchko.

According to a resolution before commissioners, the county was scheduled to receive an 80% commission on the total gross revenue of all telephone calls made by the inmates in the jail.

Frenchko said the wording of the contract states the county receives 70% of the gross revenue.

Sheriff's office Major Dan Mason said the request for proposal states 80% and that's what they will be bound to provide.

Frenchko disagreed, stating once the board approved Wednesday's agenda item, the company would be required to fulfill the terms of the contract as it is written, including providing 70% of the gross revenue from phone calls, instead of the 80% stated on the agenda item.

Central District

Board of elections testing voting machines to ensure an honest election

Spectrum News, October 6, 2024

Bipartisan poll workers meticulously testing and checking every piece of equipment that will be used on Election Day.

"What we do, we take this seriously. And it is this is our job. This is what we do for a living, to make sure that when a voter comes in contact with us, maybe once or twice or three times in a year, that they can go in and cast their ballot and feel secure," said Aaron Sellers, the public information officer for the Franklin county board of elections.

It's called logic and accuracy testing, and it happens every year to ensure the voting process is as accurate as possible.

"For the public, once they realize how things work here in Ohio, not only in Franklin County, but across the state, this is what goes on in every board of elections across the state of Ohio," said Sellers.

Voting protection is top of mind for boards of elections across the state. In Cuyahoga County, year old voting equipment can only be accessed using two keys, both belonging to a democrat and republican. In Franklin County, the warehouse, where the voting equipment is stored, has an added layer of security.

Southwest District

"We've been here before, we'll recover"

Portsmouth Daily Times, October 3, 2024

The Scioto County Commissioners have officially declared a local state of emergency after the high winds and flooding from Friday and Saturday.

The designation is important and allows local emergency responders to get the application process started for any potential state or federal disaster aid to the area. The state of emergency will last until cleanup has concluded, according to the resolution, or until the commissioners deem the emergency over.

While Gov. Mike DeWine toured the area Saturday and called the damage an "inconvenience" rather than a disaster, local officials say it's hard to understand the impact of the high, fast-moving floodwaters and damaging wind when the storm has receded.

"It's hard to describe what happened when the waters have receded," said Scioto County Commission Chair Bryan Davis. "You can't appreciate what happened when the water's receded. … We're resilient. We're a flood-prone area. We've been here before, we'll recover."

The local impact on residents and government is ongoing as residents dive into the hard work of flood cleanup after the weekend's weather event. Scioto County EMA Director Larry Mullins said there is damage countywide, including such items as: flooded basements, washed-out foundations, trees down on homes, damaged property, and food spoilage from continuing power outages.

Southeast District

Oil, gas deal will benefit Jefferson County

Times Leader, October 1, 2024

Jefferson County commissioners agreed Thursday to lease oil and gas rights for 18 parcels in Salem and Wayne townships to Ascent Resources — a deal that's guaranteed to bring in a six-figure signing bonus now, plus royalty payments on future production.

Commissioner Tony Morelli, who was not able to attend the meeting, said afterward the deal will pump $100,000 into county coffers up front and going forward, "We'll also be getting 20 percent royalty payments."

"It's one of the biggest leases that we signed in a long time," Commissioner Dave Maple said. "It's $100,000 in revenue, unexpected revenue, really, from oil and gas. In the last five or 10 years, we've seen a stream of income (from oil and gas leases) that's let us do a lot of things. This $100,000, I'm not sure what we'll end up using it for."

There are no restrictions on how the oil and gas money can be used, but in the past commissioners have made a point of investing in recreation whenever possible, "the premise being you're disturbing the property so let's see if there's something we can do to put back into the communities that are being affected by it," Maple said.

"It doesn't always work that way, but that's kind of the idea," he said. "We've used it for recreation, we've used it for other things, too. I mean, we haven't really limited what we use it for, but, you know, I personally like to see it go back into something that improves the quality of life for the citizens."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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OCTOBER 10 - 11
CORSA Retreat

OCTOBER 14
Columbus Day - Legal Holiday

OCTOBER 16
Northwest District Meeting - Henry County

OCTOBER 18
Fairfield County Housing Forum

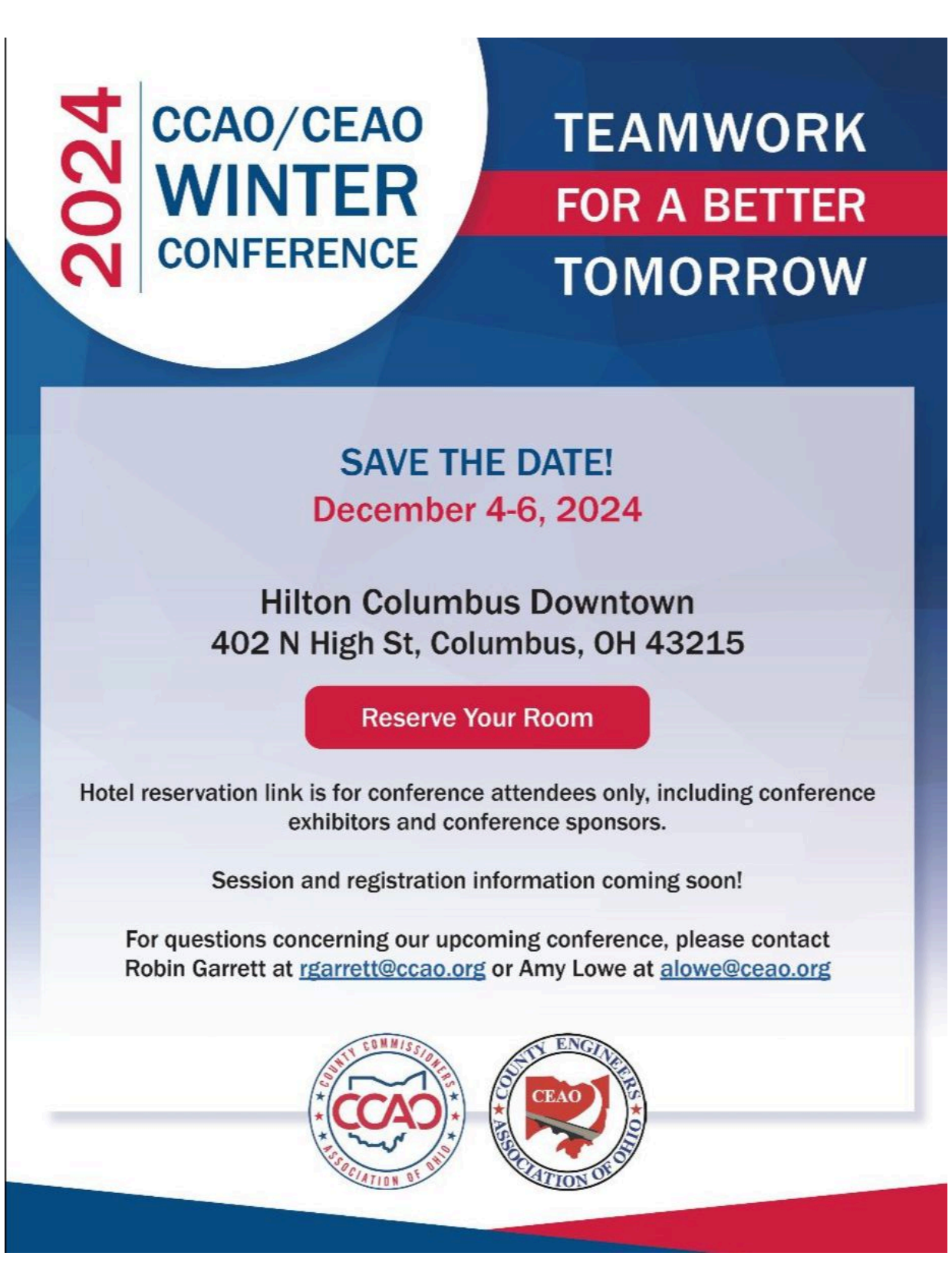
OCTOBER 25
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 5
General Election

NOVEMBER 8
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 12
OCCO Legislative Reception

DECEMBER 4 - 6
CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference


2024
CCAO/CEAO
WINTER
CONFERENCE
TEAMWORK
FOR A BETTER
TOMORROW

SAVE THE DATE!
December 4-6, 2024

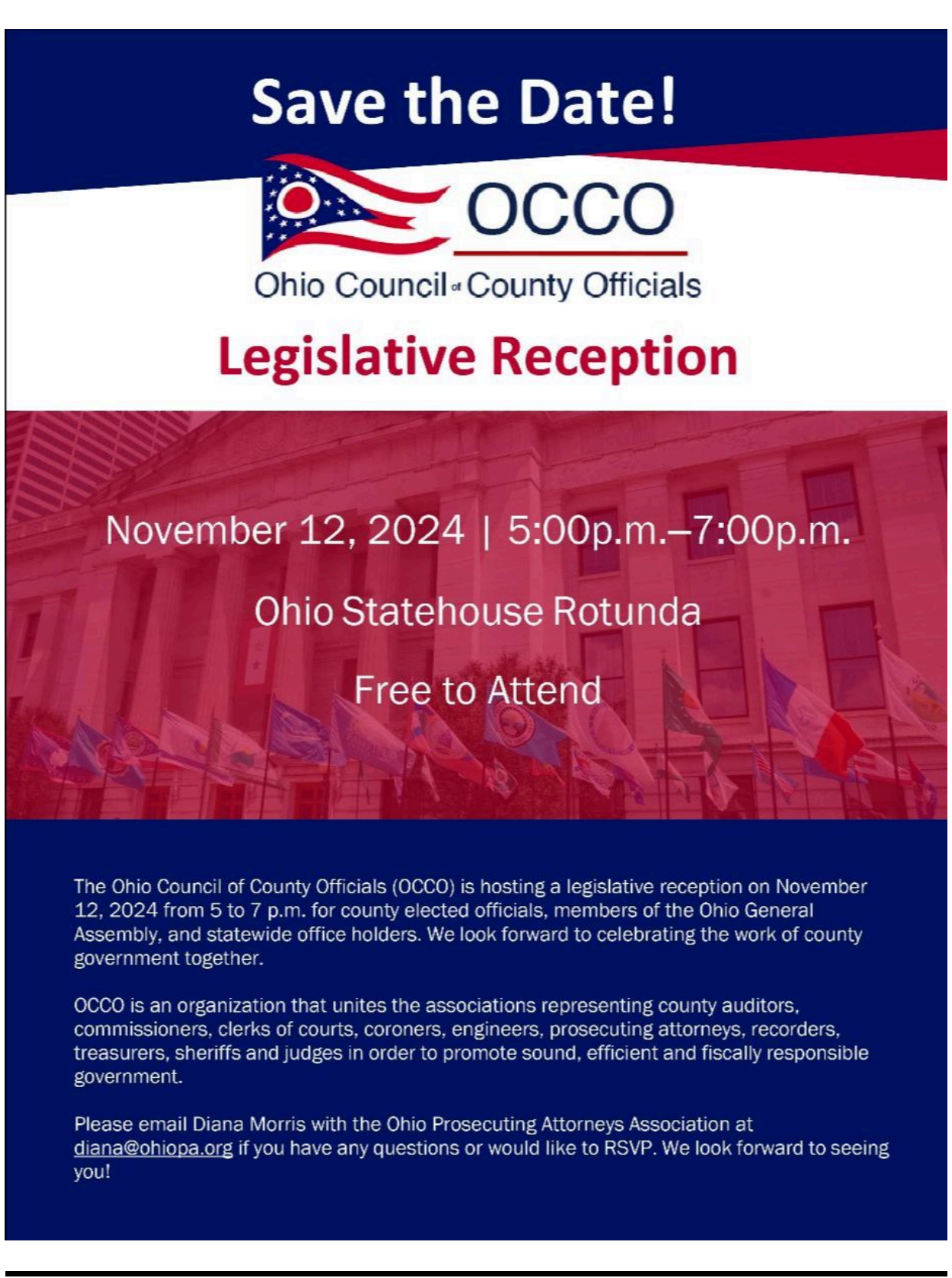
Hilton Columbus Downtown
402 N High St, Columbus, OH 43215

Reserve Your Room

Hotel reservation link is for conference attendees only, including conference exhibitors and conference sponsors.

Session and registration information coming soon!

For questions concerning our upcoming conference, please contact Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org or Amy Lowe at alowe@ceao.org


Save the Date!
OCCO
Ohio Council of County Officials
Legislative Reception

November 12, 2024 | 5:00p.m.–7:00p.m.

Ohio Statehouse Rotunda

Free to Attend

The Ohio Council of County Officials (OCCO) is hosting a legislative reception on November 12, 2024 from 5 to 7 p.m. for county elected officials, members of the Ohio General Assembly, and statewide office holders. We look forward to celebrating the work of county government together.

OCCO is an organization that unites the associations representing county auditors, commissioners, clerks of courts, coroners, engineers, prosecuting attorneys, recorders, treasurers, sheriffs and judges in order to promote sound, efficient and fiscally responsible government.

Please email Diana Morris with the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association at diana@ohiopa.org if you have any questions or would like to RSVP. We look forward to seeing you!

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