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November 12, 2024

Wayne County Commissioner Jon Hofstetter, Richland County Commissioners Tony Vero and Cliff Mears, State Representative Marilyn John, and City of Mansfield Mayor Jodie Perry at the 2024 OCCO Legislative Reception.

You can view more photos from the event at CCAO's Facebook page**.**

Association and Member News | State and Federal News | Education and Grants | County News | Job Postings

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

Back to Top

Jail funding preannouncement letter sent to counties

The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction recently informed county sheriffs and jail administrators that they will open applications for jail project funding in early December and run for about 90 days.

View the Pre-Announcement Letter here

The $50 million in funding comes from the state capital budget and will be awarded through a DRC-led approach, not a formula as was the case with the jail funding included in the operating budget.

DRC will prioritize applications and projects that:

1. Target county jails that the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction determines to have the greatest need for construction or renovation work
2. Improve substantially the condition, safety, and operational ability of the jail; and
3. Benefit jails that are, or will be, used by multiple counties.

The Department recommends that counties provide the following items in applications:

- Cost of the project, if the county will contribute funding to the project, and readiness of the project
- Life-safety issues or issues of non-compliance with state jail standards the project is addressing
- The medical or mental health area improvements the project will bring to the jail
- Feasibility study or other documentation supporting the project

While the application window is not open yet, we encourage interested counties to begin preparing their applications ahead of time.

CCAO will provide additional reminders to counties when the window opens.

State awards federal funding for opioid use and overdose prevention programs

Last week, Governor Mike DeWine and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMAS) Director LeeAnne Cornyn announced the awarding of $100 million in federal funds to efforts to fight opioid use disorder and prevent overdoses.

The grants are the fourth round of the State Opioid and Stimulant Response grants. They will support efforts to reduce overdose deaths, prevent youth substance abuse, increase recovery support services, and increase access to substance use disorder treatment. You can read more about the State Opioid and Stimulant Response program on OMHAS's website.

Of the $100 million awarded last week, more than $68.7 will go to local projects, including to county ADAMHs boards (or equivalent). A list of the award amounts can be found here.

While work still remains to be done, Ohio has shown progress in fighting overdoses. In 2023, overdose deaths decreased by 9%, far exceeding the national decrease of 2%.

CCAO Nominating Committee issues report

A letter from Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb, Chair of the CCAO Nominating Committee

Earlier this year CCAO President Chris Abbuhl (Tuscarawas County) appointed me to serve as the Chair of the CCAO Nominating Committee. Also serving on the Committee are:

1. Lenny Eliason, Athens County
2. Debbie Lieberman, Montgomery County
3. Glenn Miller, Henry County
4. Dave Wilson, Guernsey County

The Committee was charged with recommending candidates for five officer positions and seven regular two-year Board seats as well as one one-year unexpired term. The Committee met on November 8, 2024, and a copy of our report is attached. The attached summary sheet shows the composition of the Board if the Nominating Committee Report is approved. Please note that this list includes individuals who were elected to a two-year Board term last year and will be completing the last year of their terms in 2025.

This report will be formally presented at the annual CCAO Business Meeting on Thursday, December 5, 2024, and nominations will be accepted from the floor.

The committee wishes to thank all members who submitted their names for consideration. The nomination process was difficult because of the number highly qualified and motivated individuals who expressed an interest in serving.

Finally, the 2025 President will make nine more appointments to the CCAO Board for next year. Should you desire to be considered for such an appointment, please complete and return the attached form and questionnaire to Robin Garrett at CCAO ***no later than November 27, 2024***. In the event you previously expressed an interest to the Nominating Committee for a position and were not selected, you need NOT submit your name again as the next president will automatically receive names previously submitted.

You can view the full nominating report and the request for consideration for a presidential appointment here.

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

US Department of Labor overtime rule overruled

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently issued a Final Rule that became effective on July 1, 2024. The Final Rule dramatically changed the regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by increasing the standard salary level for executive, administrative, and professional employees (EAP), increasing the highly compensated employee (HCE) total annual compensation threshold, and allowing for periodic updates of the salary and compensation thresholds in years to come.

However, on November 15, the US District Court for the Eastern District of Texas ruled in *Plano Chamber of Commerce et al. v. United States Department of Labor et al.,* which vacates the rule. This means that the minimum salary threshold for white-collar exemptions reverts back to $35,568 for EAPs and $107,432 for HCEs.

In vacating the rule, the Court ruled that the DOL exceeded its authority to "define and delimit" the limits of the FLSA by substituting the DOL's duties for a salary-level test.

While the rule has been vacated, its future is unclear. The DOL may appeal the district court's ruling to the US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals or issue a revised rule to fit within the bounds of the district court's ruling. CCAO will keep members informed as the DOL decides on its next steps.

Windfall Elimination Provision repeal passes US House, moves on to Senate

Last week, the US House of Representatives passed HR 82, the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023. The bill would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), a provision of the Social Security Act that reduces Social Security benefits for individuals who have worked in both the public sector and private sector.

Repealing WEP would help alleviate the workforce shortage that many counties are experiencing. Some qualified and interested prospective employees opt not to take a public sector job because it would reduce their future (or, if they're a retiree, existing) Social Security benefits.

NACo includes the WEP repeal in its platform, and Tuscarawas County Commissioner and CCAO President Chris Abbuhl provided testimony in support of Ohio House Concurrent Resolution 6, which urged Congress to repeal the provision. CCAO has also sent a letter to the US Senate to urge the body to pass the measure before the current Congress ends on December 31.

HR 82 passed the House by a vote of 327-75, with one member voting Present and 29 members not voting. Ohio's entire Congressional delegate voted in support of the bill.

The Senate has a companion bill, S. 597, which is sponsored by Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and Maine Senator Susan Collins. It has 62 cosponsors, showing wide support.

You can read more about the House vote and the status of the Social Security Fairness Act on NACo's website. CCAO will keep members informed as the Senate considers the measure.

THIS WEEK: Department of Public Safety to host town halls on EMS workforce

The Ohio Department of Public Safety is scheduling town hall meetings with remote attendance options in November as an opportunity for stakeholders to provide live feedback regarding issues facing the EMS workforce. These meetings allow community leaders to comment on the issues and add any insights they'd like included in the final report.

Each town hall meeting will be one hour long, and leaders are encourage to attend one of the following sessions (you're welcome to attend more if you wish). Please register to attend in person or virtually at the link provided for each date you will attend. Each meeting will begin at 6pm and finish no later than 7pm:

- November 19 – Butler Tech, Fairfield Township, OH https://bit.ly/ButlerTechEMSWebinar
- November 20 – Logan-Hocking Middle School, Logan, OH https://bit.ly/LoganHockingEMSWebinar
- November 21 – Wayne County Regional Training Facility, Apple Creek, OH https://bit.ly/WayneCountyEMSWebinar

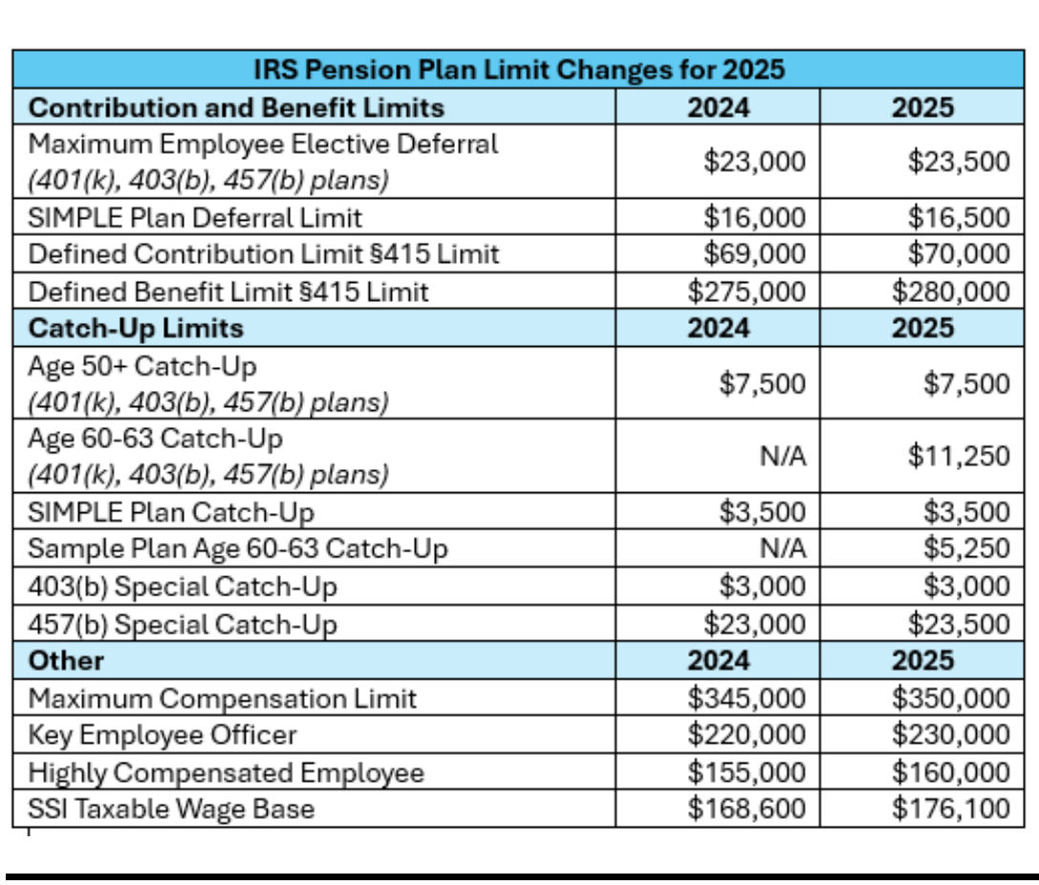
You will receive meeting location information and a link to your selected meeting(s) upon registration, please save to your calendar for your chosen session(s).

If you have any questions, please contact Nick Nudell, from The Paramedic Foundation at nnudell@paramedicfoundation.org.

2025 Retirement Limits Announced by the IRS

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recently announced the dollar limits for pension plan contributions and benefits under qualified retirement plans for 2025. The annual limits are typically adjusted based on cost-of-living increases as calculated by changes in the Consumer Price Index.

The table below shows the changes between 2024 and 2025. If you have questions about how these changes may affect you and your OCERP plan, please contact your Empower advisor or Steve Caraway, OCERP Administrator and Special Projects Manager, at scaraway@ccao.org.



IRS Pension Plan Limit Changes for 2025		
Contribution and Benefit Limits	**2024**	**2025**
Maximum Employee Elective Deferral *(401(k), 403(b), 457(b) plans)*	$23,000	$23,500
SIMPLE Plan Deferral Limit	$16,000	$16,500
Defined Contribution Limit §415 Limit	$69,000	$70,000
Defined Benefit Limit §415 Limit	$275,000	$280,000
Catch-Up Limits	**2024**	**2025**
Age 50+ Catch-Up *(401(k), 403(b), 457(b) plans)*	$7,500	$7,500
Age 60-63 Catch-Up *(401(k), 403(b), 457(b) plans)*	N/A	$11,250
SIMPLE Plan Catch-Up	$3,500	$3,500
Sample Plan Age 60-63 Catch-Up	N/A	$5,250
403(b) Special Catch-Up	$3,000	$3,000
457(b) Special Catch-Up	$23,000	$23,500
Other	**2024**	**2025**
Maximum Compensation Limit	$345,000	$350,000
Key Employee Officer	$220,000	$230,000
Highly Compensated Employee	$155,000	$160,000
SSI Taxable Wage Base	$168,600	$176,100

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.

OMHAS opens grant opportunity for Expansion of Employment Services

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) has issued a request for Expressions of Interest for organizations to establish and support programs for the employment of adults with serious mental illness and/or youth with serious emotional disturbances.

To be eligible for the opportunity, organizations must meet some minimal requirements. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Must be a non-profit 501(c)(3) and have certification in Employment Services through OMHAS.
- Must participate in employment training, conferences, and other educational opportunities as OMHAS recommends.
- Must involve and include individuals with lived experience in developing and maintaining the employment programs.

The total funding available is $1 million and is intended for organizations that are already implementing and supporting employment programs. Funds awarded through the program must be used by June 30, 2025.

PLEASE NOTE: Counties are not eligible for this grant, but OMHAS and CCAO request that our members spread information about this funding opportunity to organizations in your communities.

TOMORROW: Ransomware attack simulation to be held in Columbus

On November 19, the Professional Development Academy will host a tabletop cybersecurity training, *Columbus Cybersecurity Simulation: Ransomware Attack*. This free in-person simulation will immerse participants in a complex scenario where they'll tackle the challenges a ransomware attack poses.

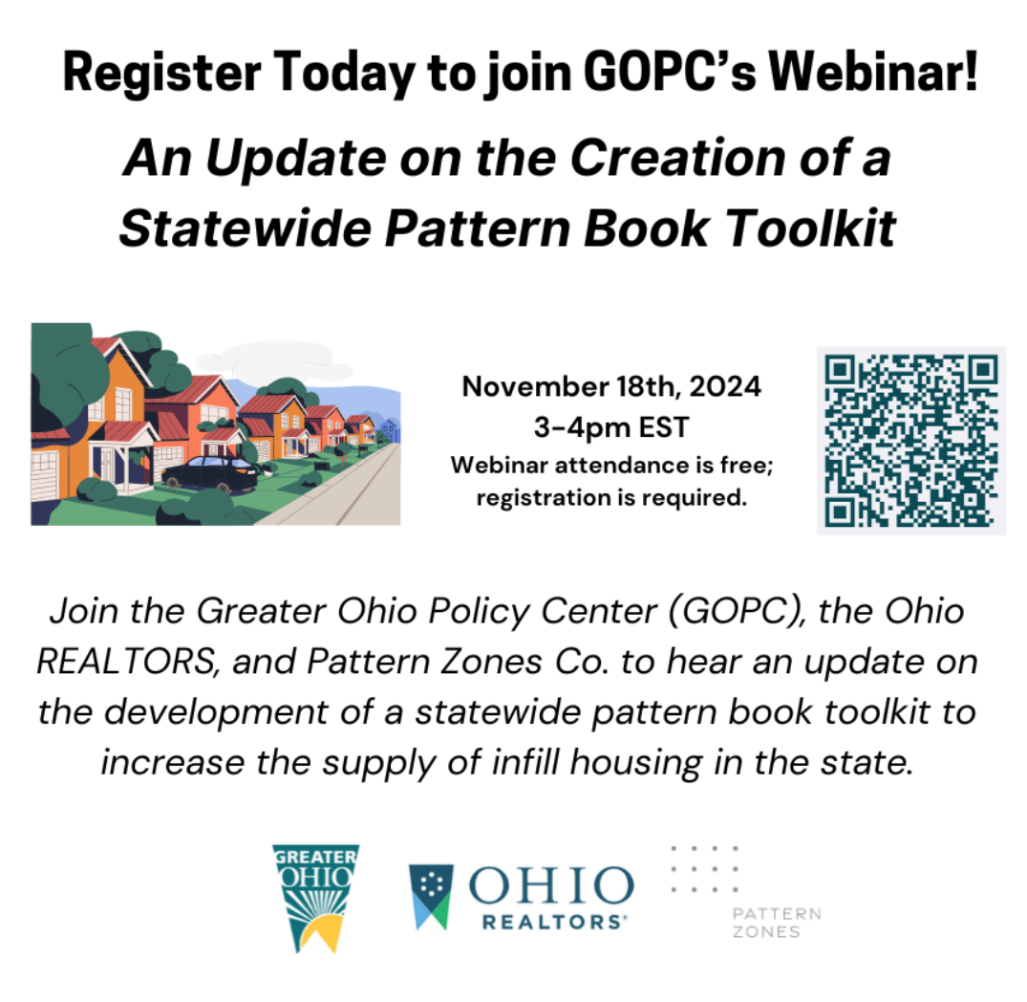
Ransomware attacks have become a growing concern in recent years, resulting in many sleepless nights among risk managers and organizational leaders due to the significant financial and reputational damage to people and organizations. This simulation focuses on preventing such damage and provides the necessary steps to respond appropriately if and when you are in a ransomware situation.

The event is free, and registration can be completed here.

TODAY: GOPC, Realtors, and Pattern Zones to host webinar on infill housing toolkit

On November 18, the Greater Ohio Policy Center, Ohio Realtors, and Pattern Zones Co. will be hosting a webinar to discuss the Statewide Pattern Book & Toolkit, a resource the organizations are developing to help increase the supply of infill housing across the state.

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



Register Today to join GOPC's Webinar!

An Update on the Creation of a Statewide Pattern Book Toolkit

November 18th, 2024
3-4pm EST
Webinar attendance is free; registration is required.

Join the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC), the Ohio REALTORS, and Pattern Zones Co. to hear an update on the development of a statewide pattern book toolkit to increase the supply of infill housing in the state.

THIS WEEK: OBM to hold 2024 Ohio Grants Summit

On November 19 and 20 (Tuesday and Wednesday), the Office of Budget and Management will host the 2024 Ohio Grants Summit, the latest iteration in the annual event that works to connect local governments with the partners and expertise needed to successfully compete for grants at both the state and federal level.

Registration for the event is free and must be completed separately for Day One and Day Two. The event is virtual and will be streamed on The Ohio Channel. Registration is not required to watch the stream, but those registered will have the opportunity to ask questions of speakers.

Each day runs from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The agenda for each day is below:

Day One:

- Grant Writing 101: Tips for a Successful Grant Application
- Ohio's Unified Approach to Federal Funding
- People, Policies, and Systems: The Foundation for Establishing Sustainable Grants Capacity

Day Two:

- Obligating and Closing Out ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds
- Uniform Guidance Update
- Water/Wastewater Roundtable

COUNTY NEWS

Back to Top

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 commissioners pass resolution to move funding

LimaOhio, November 15, 2024

The Allen County Commissioners approved a plan to move state funds toward an important project.

The commissioners agreed Thursday to move $10 million the state earmarked for a possible project at Allen County Memorial Hall.

In a resolution, the commissioners agreed to create the Lima Veteran's Memorial Hall Improvement Fund in the county's budget.

Sen. Matt Huffman (R-Lima) announced the funding in June for the empty, aging building and said it was an example of how the state can help downtowns throughout Ohio grow.

"Many downtowns across the state have been trying to revitalize, renovate and reinvigorate the vacant storefronts and empty buildings that cast a shadow on our communities," Huffman said at the time. "This project will keep Lima's downtown moving forward as a great destination to work, shop and call home."

Northeast District

Commissioners to stabilize county health insurance

Tribune Chronicle, November 14, 2024

Trumbull County commissioners are expected to vote today on proposed insurance adjustments designed to stabilize the county's insurance program amid escalating health care costs.

If approved, the new premiums and chargeback rates will take effect in 2025 and affect all county employees, union and nonunion.

The issue was addressed at a meeting Wednesday by Human Resources Director Alexandra DeVengencie-Bush, who said without the changes, the county's self-insurance reserves could be quickly depleted, which may lead to cuts in services and potential layoffs.

She outlined the financial urgency driving the proposed adjustments, noting the county pays an annual premium of $22 million to insure its 818 employees, but recoups only $2.8 million, creating a significant shortfall.

Central District

Fairfield County Workforce Center opens new engineering technology lab

Lancaster Eagle Gazette, November 14, 2024

The Fairfield County Workforce Center has unveiled its new Engineering Technology Lab.

With the construction beginning in April, this $2 million project was funded by the Fairfield County Commissioners and the State of Ohio with an additional $1.5 million for new equipment. The new lab will provide a revitalized space for students to experience hands-on engineering. Programs will be administered by instructors from Ohio University Lancaster and Hocking College.

Students in the engineering technology program will be able to earn an associate degree in Engineering Technology or certificates in Mechatronics, Automation, or Semiconductor Manufacturing. Students also have the option to continue their education at Ohio University for a bachelor's degree in engineering.

"This workforce center is a result of amazing collaboration from the community, our K-12 education partners, university education partners, and the vision of our county commissioners," said Rick Szabrak, Economic and Workforce Development Director for Fairfield County. "We've had hundreds of people come through here already and I'm excited to see now that we have this new lab how many more people will come through."

Southwest District

Greene County OKs plan for tweaked new courthouse, use of old courthouse

Dayton Daily News, November 14, 2024

The Greene County Commissioners approved a plan Thursday that would consolidate county operations from three campuses to two, after some tweaks that addressed most of Greene County judges' concerns with the plan.

Greene County's facilities master plan calls for consolidating county operations at the west Xenia campus and at a downtown government center where the Greene County Jail and other government offices are now. The county's third location at Ledbetter Road in Xenia would no longer be used for county operations and would later be opened up for businesses.

"This is a living document," Commissioner Rick Perales said. "This isn't a one and done ... We want to be smart, but it gives us a roadmap to where we want to go and how we want to use our facilities, which is a big part of our operation."

The plan previously called for a $23 million courts building that would consolidate all court operations on one campus.

Four out of five Greene County judges raised concerns about the plan in October, particularly in regards to combining juvenile and adult court operations in the same building, as well as separating probation from normal court operations.

Both of those are no longer happening. While the new court building is still planned for the general division, domestic relations, and other courts, Greene County Juvenile Court will stay in their current facility on Greene Way Boulevard, along with the juvenile probation department. Adult probation will move to the new court building instead.

Southeast District

Approved Travels: Commissioners OK all-purpose, utility vehicles on county roads

Marietta Times, November 15, 2024

Washington Commissioners voted to allow all-purpose and utility vehicles on county roads Thursday.

During a county commission meeting Thursday morning, Commissioners James Booth and Charlie Schilling approved a resolution that allows all-purpose and utility vehicles on county roads. Commissioner Kevin Ritter was not at the meeting so he did not vote on the resolution.

The resolution defines an all-purpose vehicle as "any self-propelled vehicle designed primarily for cross-country travel on land and water, or more than one type of terrain, and steered by wheels or caterpillar treads, or any combination thereof, including vehicles that operate on a cushion of air."

These all-purpose vehicles are commonly known as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), all-season vehicles, minibike and trail bikes, according to the resolution.

The resolution said utility vehicles do not include any vehicle principally used in playing golf nor does it include utility vehicles that are designed with a bed and principally for the purpose of transporting materials or cargo in connection with constructions, agriculture, forestry, grounds maintenance, lawn and garden, materials handling or similar activities

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

NOVEMBER 22
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 28
Thanksgiving

DECEMBER 4 - 6
CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference

DECEMBER 25
Christmas

DECEMBER 31
New Year's Eve

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day

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