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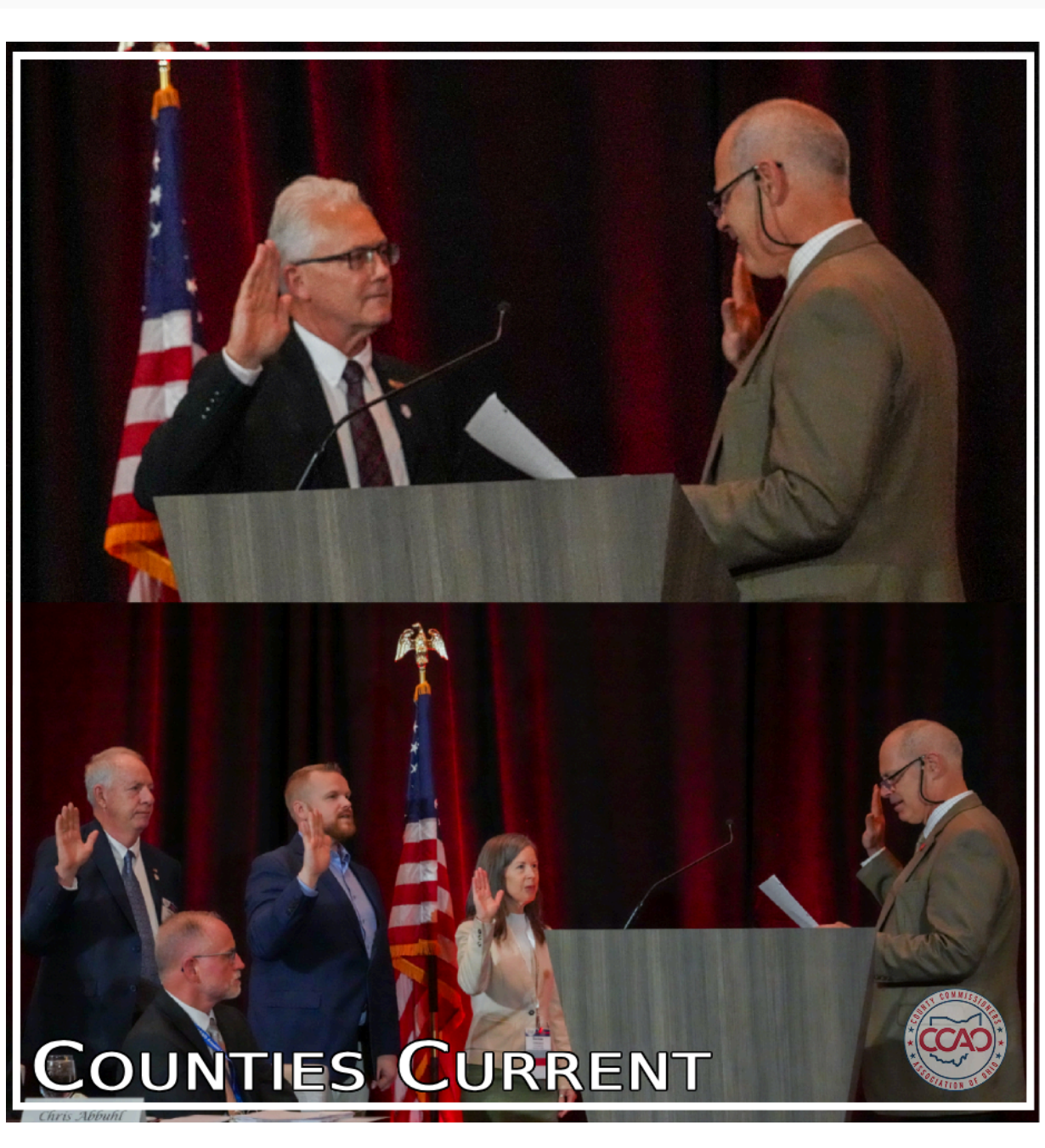

December 9, 2024

During last week's Winter Conference, the Association voted in the Board of Directors officers for 2025. They were sworn in by State Representative Adam Bird (R-New Richmond). The officers are:

President: David Painter (Clermont County)
1st Vice-President: Denise Driehaus (Hamilton County)
2nd Vice-President: Casey Kozlowski (Ashtabula County)
Treasurer: Ilene Shapiro (Summit County) *(not pictured)*
Secretary: Joe Antram (Logan County)

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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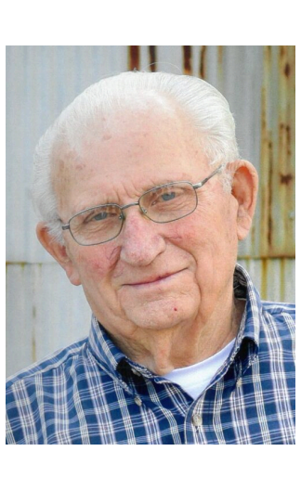
Two CCAO alumni pass away

It is with sadness that we report that two CCAO alumni passed away last week. Former Wayne County Commissioner Fred Cannon and former Putnam County Commissioner James Ruen both passed away peacefully on Thursday, December 5.

Fred Cannon was 82 and had served as Wayne County Commissioner from 1992 to 2004. A dairy farmer for more than 30 years, Fred was a part of the Ohio State University Dairy Judging team which won a national championship and served as the president of the Milk Producers Association. He also restored barns, including one on the historic Cumberland Island, Georgia.

You can view Fred's full obituary here.



James was 91 had a long career of public service. He served in the Ohio National Guard for four years, was a long-time member of the Continental Volunteer Fire Department, and worked for the Ohio Department of Transportation. James served as Putnam County Commissioner from 1983 to 1985, after which he served as the Village of Continental Mayor for 20 years.

You can view James' full obituary here.

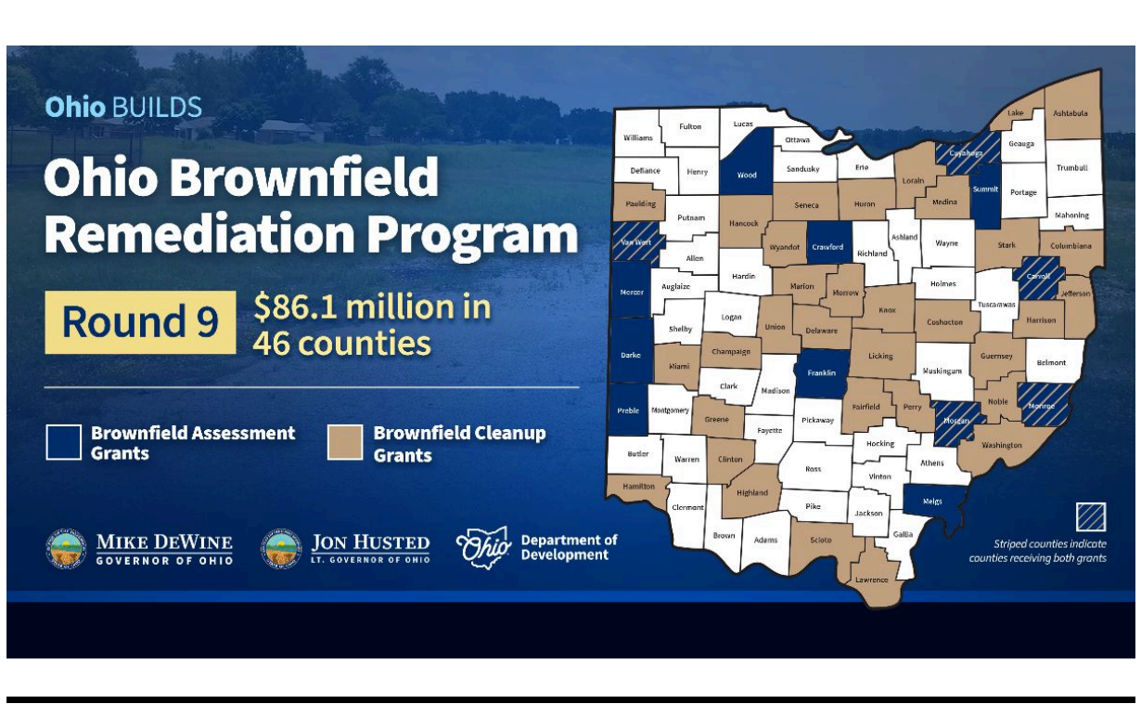
CORSA is now 73 Counties Strong

State awards $86.1 million for brownfield remediation

Last week, the DeWine-Husted announced another round of funding under the Brownfield Remediation Program. The latest round distributes $86.1 million to 81 projects across 46 counties.

Below are a few notable projects. A complete list of projects funded under the latest award round can be found here.

- **Carroll County**
  - $336,000 to abate asbestos and remove waste from a former school building. The redevelopment of the building will be used for JFS and Board of Elections offices.
- **Champaign County**
  - $1 million to close and remediate a former landfill. After the OEPA clears the remediation, the site will be used as a staging area for the county engineer.
- **Darke County**
  - $151,000 to assess potential contamination at the Greenville Municipal Airport Terminal. The assessment will guide future remediation efforts and facilitate expansion.
- **Greene County**
  - $263,868 for asbestos abatement and demolition of a long-vacant elementary school building. The property will be redeveloped for agricultural land.
- **Jefferson County**
  - $422,500 to help remediate asbestos at a former coal plant, an early stage in a long-term project to demolish the structure and redevelop the land for future energy-related projects.
- **Marion County**
  - $406,740 to abate asbestos and demolish dilapidated structures. The redeveloped land will be used either for affordable housing or a new fire station.
- **Washinton County**
  - $1.6 million to demolish a former industrial building and to remediate tainted soil. The property will be used for a women's and children's hospital.


Ohio BUILDS
Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program
Round 9
$86.1 million in 46 counties
Brownfield Assessment Grants
Brownfield Cleanup Grants
MIKE DEWINE GOVERNOR OF OHIO
JON HUSTED LT. GOVERNOR OF OHIO
Ohio Department of Development
Striped counties indicate counties receiving both grants

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Qualified immunity constitutional amendment cleared to gather signatures

On Wednesday, the Ohio Ballot Board certified that the citizen-initiated petition to amend the Ohio Constitution to eliminate qualified immunity contains only one proposed amendment. This clears the petition organizers to gather signatures to place the petition on the ballot. Due to the time it takes to gather signatures and for the Secretary of State to verify their validity, the proposed amendment would most likely go to voters on the November 2025 ballot.

The proposed amendment would eliminate immunity for government actions, including qualified, sovereign, and prosecutorial immunities in civil cases.

It would also:

- Allow the state and its political subdivisions to be held accountable for the conduct of their employees.
- Give the Courts of Common Pleas subject matter jurisdiction over cases arising from a claim allowed under the amendment.
- Permit a judge to order the state or government "to take reasonable measures to prevent a similar rights violation from re-occurring" when someone wins a civil case.
- Provide the state or political subdivision the option to terminate the public employee's employment, agreement, or contract when someone wins a case against the government.
- The individual filing a civil suit against a government actor or a public employee gets to select whether the trial is a bench or jury trial.
- A government actor terminating the employment of the public employee involved in the suit has no effect on the actor's liability.
- If the government actor is found liable, the individual who filed the suit is entitled to any or all of the following:
  - Compensation for damages with no limitation
  - Equitable or injunctive relief
  - Recovery of attorney's fees
  - Any other remedies available under state, federal, or common law
- The statute of limitations for a claim of deprivation of a constitutional right is six years.

As a note, the signature requirements to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot are at least 10% of the total votes cast for the office of governor at the last gubernatorial election (currently, the threshold is at least 413,487 signatures) and signatures from at least 44 counties.

For a county to count, the organizers must gather at least 5% of the total votes cast for government in the last gubernatorial election (currently, this ranges from 198 signatures in Vinton County to 21,287 signatures in Franklin County).

Congress considering WIOA reauthorization

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives is working to pass legislation reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The proposed legislation, the A Stronger Workforce for America Act, has passed the U.S. House and, following a bicameral agreement reached by Congressional committee leaders, is on a fast-track procedure in the Senate which requires the support of all current US Senators. As of Friday afternoon, there were a handful of Senators who have placed a hold on the bill, which stops it from moving. It remains unclear if the bill will ultimately be enacted this year.

This week, CCAO sent a letter to Senators Brown and Vance outlining concerns we have regarding the proposed legislation, including:

- The mandate of 50% spending on training for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, which creates a one size fits all system that will harm the pathways and partnerships already in place and the job seekers using them. Our counties support training efforts across the state, and CCAO maintains that the workforce development system is most successful when locals determine the best program delivery methods for their communities.
- The Act also increases the funding level remaining with the governor from 15% to 25%. Without additional investment in workforce programs from the federal level, this will result in a cut in funding to our local boards. CCAO urges maintaining or increasing the percentage of dollars that flow to Ohio's local boards. With a decrease, it is likely we would see job centers shutter; many are already struggling to operate with the funding provided under WIOA.
- The proposed language gives the governor greater discretion in redesignating local workforce areas, without local input. Local decisions regarding the organization and structure of local workforce areas are crucial to the continued success of assistance in our communities. Ohio has shown that local authority fosters community-centric workforce solutions and provides an easier pathway for employers and job seekers to have input in the workforce development process. Our counties and local workforce areas must maintain local discretion over area designation.

The National Association of Workforce Boards released a statement on Tuesday that includes more information.

If you have questions, please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org. CCAO will continue to monitor the legislation, along with our partners in the National Association of Counties.

Reference material for serving on a county board of developmental disabilities released

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities released a guide titled Guiding Voices in County Board Governance. The guide is a reference document for people interested in serving on a county board of developmental disabilities, or people who have been appointed to serve. It outlines the role of county boards of developmental disabilities, the selection process, and details about board service.

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.

Application window for FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant open until December 20

The 2024 round of FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is open for applications until December 20. The federal grant program enhances firefighters' safety by providing direct assistance for critical training and equipment.

FEMA expects to award about $291.6 million awards under the 2024 program. The match rate for grants depends on the size of the applicant's jurisdiction:

- Applicants serving 20,000 residents or fewer must provide at least a 5% match;
- Applicants serving between 20,000 and 1 million residents must provide at least a 10% match;
- Applicants serving a jurisdiction of more than 1 million residents must provide at least a 15% match.

Among the eligible applicants are fire departments or agencies with a formal arrangement with a territory authority (such as a state, county, municipality, fire district, or township), including volunteer fire departments.

Applicants may request funds for operations and safety, vehicle acquisition, or regional projects.

FEMA's website provides more information about the grant program, including how to apply and more specifics about eligible requests.

Recordings of 2024 Ohio Grants Summit available online

Last week, the Office of Budget and Management held the 2024 Ohio Grants Summit, the latest iteration of the annual event that connects local governments with the partners and expertise needed to successfully compete for grants at the state and federal levels. Recordings of the two-day event are available on the Ohio Channel and are linked 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

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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

Officials grapple with jail costs, new jail recommended
Advertiser Tribune, December 6, 2024
With costs to operate the Hancock County jail increasing and expected to total $5.5 million in 2025, the county commissioners are looking for ways to save money.

On paper, it would appear that it might cost less to house all local prisoners at a regional jail, the Corrections Center of Northwest Ohio (CCNO) in Stryker. The current Hancock County jail, built 35 years ago, is too small and has become outdated.

The commissioners on Thursday floated the idea of reducing jail operations so prisoners would spend less time there and get shipped to the regional jail. But that idea was discouraged by nearly 30 officials, including Findlay police, the Sheriff's Office, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, probation, mental health, nonprofit and other agencies. Findlay Municipal Court currently sentences some people to serve at CCNO, but its use of the facility is more limited, Judge Alan Hackenberg said.

Officials cited a variety of reasons to keep the jail a maximum security, full service facility. Transporting prisoners to a jail over an hour away would put the safety of officers and the public at risk and would incur transportation and overtime costs. Officials questioned whether there would be much cost savings at all. Others said mental health services, nonprofit and other recidivism-reducing services would be hindered.

Northeast District

Will Tax Incentives Automatically Transfer If Southern Park Mall Is Sold?
The Business Journal, December 2, 2024
With the possible sale of Southern Park Mall creating concern, Mahoning County commissioners and the Western Reserve Port Authority sought a legal opinion about the Community Reinvestment Area agreement the mall was previously granted.

Contrary to some reports, the CRA will not automatically transfer if the mall is sold, Mahoning County Commissioner Carol Rimedio-Righetti said Wednesday. She said legal counsel has advised that commissioners will get a say regarding any change to the CRA agreement.

Reports surfaced this fall that Washington Prime Group, the owner of the mall, is interested in selling it to Kohan Retail Investment Group of New York. No details have been released about the terms of the sale of the mall, which has the CRA tax incentive agreement in place.

In early 2020, the commissioners approved the CRA agreement with Washington Prime Group. At the time, it was reported that the CRA was part of an incentive package through the port authority, which would reimburse Washington Prime Group, located in Columbus, $6 million of the $30 million overall cost of the DeBartolo Commons project.

Central District

County and state officials discuss possible U.S. 33/I-70 connector road
Lancaster Eagle Gazette, December 2, 2024
Fairfield County commissioner Jeff Fix said the county is looking at possible development opportunities should the Ohio Department of Transportation build a connector road from U.S. 33 to Interstate 70.

Fix said it makes sense to develop along U.S. 33. He and other county officials recently met with state officials to talk about ODOT's future road construction plans and development.

"Commercial or industrial," he said. "(U.S.) 33 is our corridor, if you will. So if you take (U.S.) 33 at that (planned) Pickerington Road interchange and go all the way down to the edge of Lancaster, that whole area is ripe for development."

Fix said he thinks a connector between U.S. 33 and I-70 will happen, but that it's a matter of when.

"It might be 20 years from now, it might be 10 years from now," he said. "I think that will be the fastest we could probably get it done. Somewhere in the next 10 to 20 years I expect that connector to be built."

Southwest District

Highland County commissioners review 2025 budget numbers, anticipated foster care costs
Highland County Press, December 3, 2024
Highland County Auditor Alex Butler submitted the estimated resources for fiscal year 2025 during Highland County commissioners' Dec. 2 meeting, which also included a discussion with Highland County Job & Family Services Director Jeremy Ratcliff on the Children Services agency's needs moving into the next year.

The meeting was held Monday at 1 p.m., instead of their usual Wednesday at 9 a.m. time, due to staff attending the County Commissioners Association of Ohio's winter conference this week.

Butler has calculated the county's resources for 2025 at $16,750,000, an increase over 2024's $14 million.

The figures submitted by Butler included $2,650,000 for real estate property taxes; $9.5 million for permissive sales tax; $620,000 in casino revenue; $95,000 for PILOT [Payment in Lieu of Taxes]; $400,000 in local government funds; $1 million in fees; and $2,485,000 in other receipts.

With the exception of local government funds ($500,000 in 2024) and fees ($1.1 million last year), all of the totals are increased over 2024, while Butler pointed out the PILOT is a new addition.

As previously reported, the Ohio Department of Development in September issued an "order establishing service payment for tax year 2024" for New Market Solar I.

"We will receive our first PILOT payment from solar activity in the county next year, and I anticipate that to be around $95,000," Butler said. "As years go on, we'll add to that number as more solar projects become active."

For the overall picture, Butler said he anticipated permissive sales tax receipts — which have seen record highs over the past five years — to "plateau at best," plus potential "fluctuation with the fees" collected from county offices with the real estate market.

Southeast District

Commissioners seek bids to repaint water tank
Times Leader, December 4, 2024
For the third consecutive week, the Belmont County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday announced a change to its regularly scheduled weekly meeting.

On Dec. 11, its meeting will be moved to 11 a.m. instead of the usual 9 a.m. due to a scheduling conflict. This week, commissioners met on Tuesday instead of the usual Wednesday.

After scheduling issues were resolved, Commissioner Jerry Echemann moved to advertise for bids to repaint the McKeever water storage tank for the Belmont County Water and Sewer District. The motion was based on the recommendation of Belmont County Water and Sewer District Director Kelly Porter.

"The engineer's estimate for this project is $600,000," Echemann said. "That's obviously a pretty expensive paint job, but these water tanks need to be tended to or they won't function and they need to be painted so we need to pay for it and take care of it so we don't have problems down the road."

Echemann and Commissioners J.P. Ditton and Josh Meyer unanimously approved advertising for bids for the work.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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DECEMBER 25
Christmas

DECEMBER 31
New Year's Eve

JANUARY 1
New Year's Day

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