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January 6, 2025

CCAO, CEBCO, CORSA, the CCAO Service Corporation, and the CCAO Research and Education Foundation are looking forward to a fruitful 2025!

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Tom Gagel, former Mercer County Commissioner, passes away at age 83

Last week, former Mercer County Commissioner Tom Gagel passed away at the age of 83. Tom served on the commission for seven years.

Outside of his service as a commissioner, Tom also owned Gagel Hardware, where he was dedicated to helping residents no matter the time of day. He was also a member of the Knights of St. John, the Soundwaves Barbershop Chorus, and the St. John Church choir.

You can view Tom's obituary here.

Small County Affairs committee to meet on January 16

The CCAO Small County Affairs Committee will meet on Thursday, January 16, at Defiance College in Hubbard Hall in the Banquet Room (103 College Pl, Defiance, OH 43512). The meeting will start at 11:30 a.m., with lunch provided at 11:45 a.m. We will have the room until 2:30 p.m. Please see the virtual link below if you are unable to attend in person.

During lunch, the committee will have a roundtable discussion regarding issues facing small counties. After lunch, the committee will hear from Peter Voderberg and Amy Elbaor from BroadbandOhio and from Phil Maag, President and CEO of Metalink Technologies.

Please **RSVP** to James Kennedy at jkennedy@ccao.org and let him know if you will attend in person or virtually and if you will be in attendance for lunch.

State status of National Day of Mourning (January 9, 2025)

Counties have been inquiring whether they are obligated to give county employees the day off on January 9 following President Biden's Executive Order closing federal agencies and offices in recognition of former President Jimmy Carter, who recently passed. The day off for federal employees follows recent precedent, as President Trump similarly closed agencies when President George H.W. Bush died in 2018.

The Governor's Office has informed CCAO that there are no plans to make January 9th a state holiday, and state operations will remain open. Thus, counties are under no obligation to close or modify operations.

The Executive Order issued by President Biden to close operations has been likened to a federal order he signed giving federal employees a day off for Christmas Eve. Questions had arisen due to R.C. 124.19, which lists state holidays counties are to follow and provides flexibility by stating "and any day appointed and recommended by the governor of this state or the president of the United States."

If you have further questions, please contact CCAO Research Analyst Nick Ciolli at nciolli@ccao.org or 614.580.0525.

Applications open for jail funding projects

The Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) is accepting applications for jail funding projects, to be funded through the $50 million made available through the capital budget. You can access the application here. Applications close on March 3.

As a reminder, DRC will give priority to 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.

Another important aspect of this round of funding is that ***there is no*** prescribed local match. While the amount of match funding the county offers may affect the likelihood of receiving funding, the match is open to negotiation between DRC and the county rather than a mandatory rate.

CCAO is happy to help counties craft robust applications. If you would like any suggestions or assistance from the Association, please contact Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty, either at kpetty@ccao.org or 614-220-7977.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

JobsOhio

Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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President Biden signs Social Security Fairness Act, repealing WEP and GPO

Yesterday, President Biden signed H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, into law. The Act repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) in Social Security, which currently reduce Social Security benefits for individuals who have worked in both the public sector and private sector. The repeal of the WEP and GPO will help many public servants throughout Ohio.

CCAO's advocacy on the repeal was spearheaded by three members: former Tuscarawas County Commissioner and 2024 CCAO President Chris Abbuhl, Shelby County Commissioner and 2019 CCAO President Julie Ehemann, and Clermont County Commissioner and current CCAO President David Painter.

CCAO thanks former Senator Sherrod Brown for his many years of leadership on this issue, Vice President-Elect JD Vance for his support on behalf of Ohioans, and President Biden for signing the bill into law.

CCAO will be working with NACo and other parties on guidance for counties. Please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.orgwith questions.

Deadline to become an America 250-OH community, eligibility for grant program both extended

The deadline for counties and other local governments to designate themselves as America 250-Ohio Communities (AM 250-OH) has been extended to January 31. Currently, 78 counties are America 250-OH communities. We would love to see that number increase to 88 by the end of the month!

Becoming an AM 250-OH community also enables the entity to apply for grants through the America 250-Ohio entity. The current grant cycle seeks projects under the categories of "Storytelling" and "Education."

Examples of "Storytelling" activities include heritage trees, recording veteran stories, and spotlighting unique local history stories.

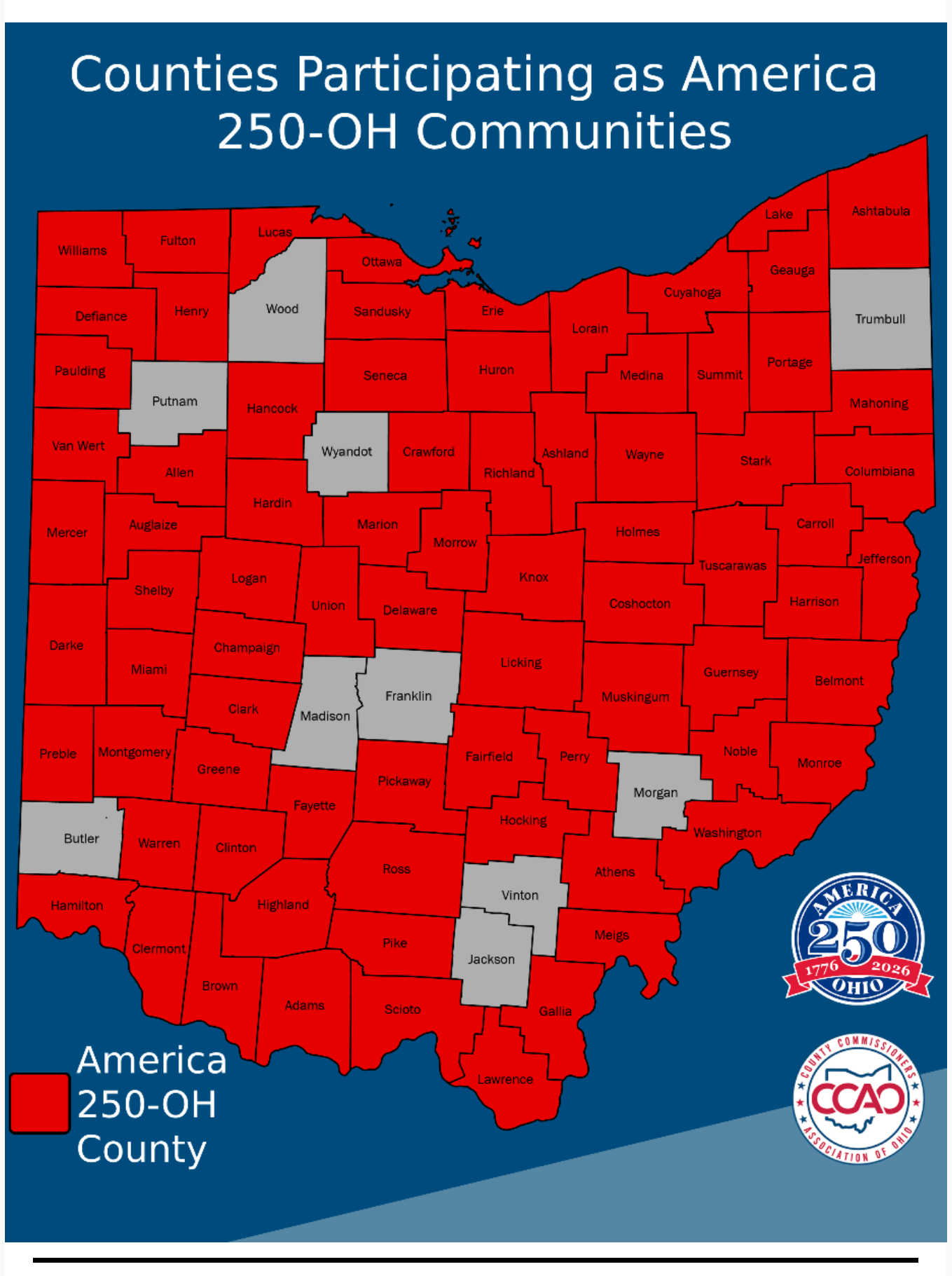
Examples of "Education" activities include efforts to educate students and the community on founding documents, on the judiciary process, and through service-learning opportunities.

You can learn more about these grants here.

To Become an AM250-OH Community, follow these steps:

- Designate one individual as the primary contact for the application.
- Apply to be an official AM 250-OH Community.
- Upon approval of the application, use the AM 250-OH Communities resolution template and present it to the appropriate approving authority for passage.
- Pass, sign, and send a digital copy of the AM 250-OH Communities resolution to the AM 250-OH office.
- Within 30 days of passing the resolution begin to form your committee – designate and send the names of the individuals from the appropriate governmental office and the local cultural, civic, or corporate partner who will serve as the AM 250-OH Community liaisons.
- Begin to form your AM 250-OH committee – involve all types of organizations and begin the planning process.
- An AM 250-OH staff liaison will work with you and your committee to provide information and resources to help you be successful.

The initial mailing of this issue of Counties Current included an incorrect map that omitted 25 counties that have become America 250-Ohio Communities. The updated map is below.



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.

PUCO safe digging grant program accepting applicants

Excavation damage is a leading cause of pipeline related injuries and fatalities. That's why it's so important to educate the public about safe digging. Whether it's pipelines, cable, fiber, conduit, water, sewer or other underground infrastructure, Ohio law requires one to contact underground locating services prior to any digging or excavating.

Up to $50,000 is available for:

1. Public awareness programs established by a protection service;
2. Training and education programs for excavators, operators, designers, persons who locate underground utility facilities, or other persons;
3. Programs providing incentives for excavators, operators, persons who locate underground utility facilities, or other persons to reduce the number and severity of compliance failures.

The official application window closes on March 1.

You can learn more about this opportunity by visiting PUCO.ohio.gov/DamagePreventionGrant.

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

Allen County Commissioners excited for big projects in 2025

Hometown Stations, January 3, 2025

The Allen County Commissioners are back at it as the new year starts.

The first agenda meeting of the year saw standard business with renewals and agreements with different departments. Commissioners say that they will see several big projects in 2025 and are ready to hit the ground running.

"The commissioners are certainly excited that we're very shortly going to see the physical start of our new administration building. That has come after a couple of good years of planning and budgeting and bringing contracting together. In 2025 we plan to finalize plans for either a remodel or a relocation of the child support enforcement agency. And this is something the board of commissioners have had on our plate in this office for well over five years. But once that is decided and underway, then we're going to pivot to the courthouse and a renovation there. So it will be really exciting if yet in 2025 we can start the planning process for the courthouse," said Beth Seibert, Allen County Commissioner.

Northeast District

Ohio County Gets Creative to Activate Rural Broadband

GovTech, January 3, 2025

A new set of bids seeking to widen the scope of companies interested in providing broadband Internet service to areas where it doesn't exist in Ashtabula County have been set.

Two proposals to provide broadband services for rural areas of Ashtabula County were bid last year, and Spectrum Mid-America was selected as the winning bid, but later could not comply with the language in the bid, according to the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners.

The bids are part of a $2.5 million grant that can be used for the purpose of expanding broadband Internet in rural areas. On Tuesday, the commissioners officially rejected last years bids and rebid the project, hoping to receive more bids.

The commissioners said a consultant suggested breaking down the project, so companies could bid on smaller portions of it. The hope is that multiple companies will bid on the smaller parts of the project so more people can receive Internet.

"It is a little different strategy," Commissioner J.P. Ducro said.

Ducro said another Internet project with Spectrum and Brightspeed has provided relief for rural areas of Ashtabula and Trumbull counties and is part of a larger plan to get broadband Internet to everyone in the area.

Central District

Richland County commissioners hike rainy day, carryover & capital funds

Richland Source, January 3, 2025

Richland County experienced another good year financially in 2024 and enters 2025 with about $34 million worth of general fund money in various reserve funds, according to the Board of Commissioners.

The county finished 2024 with a $7.9 million general fund budget surplus for the year — $2.2 million of which will go into the county's "rainy day" fund.

That influx of money into the "budget stabilization" account increases that pot of money to $9.4 million, according to county Commissioner Tony Vero.

What is a rainy day fund for the Board of Commissioners?

"Specifically, it's just that," said Commissioner Tony Vero, who was elected Thursday as the board chairman for 2025. "It's there in case of an emergency.

"The major example we always talk about was the 2009-2010 financial crisis when the county didn't have a rainy day fund to speak of and they had to furlough employees," Vero said. "We are setting aside money in the event something like that happens again."

Adding money to the "rainy day" fund is just one area commissioners moved funds into from the surplus.

Southwest District

Little sworn into office as county engineer, is prepared for weekend storm

Record Herald, January 3, 2025

Fayette County Engineer Jason Little was sworn into office Friday for a new term of office by county administrator Dana Foor at the Fayette County Commissioner's office.

Little said "it's going to be a bad weather weekend." He went on to say that "crews were set up beginning at midnight [Friday] doing 12-hour shifts throughout the weekend and early next week. Everything [roads] has been treated already and they are ready."

A later statement said that he called in one crew to check out a couple of bad areas at 6 p.m Friday due to recent accidents in the county. Alan Stanley is calling all crews in at 8 p.m Friday to be ready for icing conditions and the coming snow, Little said.

Little said that wind is the problem, because it causes snow to blow and as it melts it causes wet spots that can turn to ice on roadways as temperatures fall.

Southeast District

Commissioners make historical board appointment

Herald Star, January 2, 2025

The Jefferson County commissioners made an historical appointment to the county Board of Developmental Disabilities during their final meeting of 2024 on Tuesday.

Commissioners Eric Timmons and Tony Morelli — in the absence of outgoing Commissioner Dave Maple — approved the appointment of Kristen McGlone to the BODD. McGlone will be the first board member who's eligible for the BODD's services, which are intended for individuals with developmental disabilities.

BODD Superintendent Mike Zinno said the seven-member board recommended McGlone to replace Jim Padden, whose term ended Wednesday.

"Since July, our board has been interviewing different individuals to be our next board member," Zinno said. "This is historical because we've always had parents and guardians on our board. … Across the state of Ohio, all county boards of DD are appointing individuals who are eligible for our program, and (McGlone) will be the first one in Jefferson County."

Zinno said McGlone "comes highly qualified" for the position, being a local leader in the self-advocacy group at PALS Chrysalis Health in Mingo Junction, repeat attendee at the statewide Synergy Conference for members of the intellectual/developmental disability community and participant in DD Awareness Day at the Ohio Statehouse.

CCAO Board of Directors President

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The 2025 CCAO Board of Directors President is Clermont County Commissioner David Painter!

Commissioner Painter is the third Clermont County Commissioner to be CCAO President, following in the footsteps of Commissioner Martha Dorsey (1996) and Commissioner Edwin Humphrey (2017).

President Painter's election moves Clermont County into a crowded tie for the third-most presidents in CCAO history. Other counties that have had three presidents are Ashtabula, Belmont, Cuyahoga, Lake, Ross, and Trumbull counties. These counties trail Montgomery County (seven presidents), Franklin County (five presidents), and Allen, Butler, Mahoning, Summit, and Tuscarawas counties (four presidents).

Congratulations President Painter!

Former Clermont County Commissioner Martha Dorsey. Dorsey served as the CCAO Board of Directors President in 1996.

Former Clermont County Commissioner Edwin Humphrey. Humphrey served as the CCAO Board of Directors President in 2017.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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JANUARY 10
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

JANUARY 16
CCAO Small County Affairs Meeting, Defiance County (and Virtual)

JANUARY 20
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

JANUARY 24
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

JANUARY 31
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

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