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COUNTIES CURRENT
CCAO
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

January 27, 2025

The CCAO Board of Directors held its first meeting of 2025 last Friday.

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

Eddie Place sworn in as Washington County Commissioner

Last week, Eddie Place was sworn in as Washington County Commissioner, filling the seat vacated by Representative Kevin Ritter when he took office as a state representative earlier this month.

Commissioner Place is the owner of Mountaineer Mechanical, an HVAC and plumbing company with locations in Parkersburg, WV, and Athens, and runs a cattle and crop farm in Little Hocking.

Welcome to CCAO, Commissioner Place!

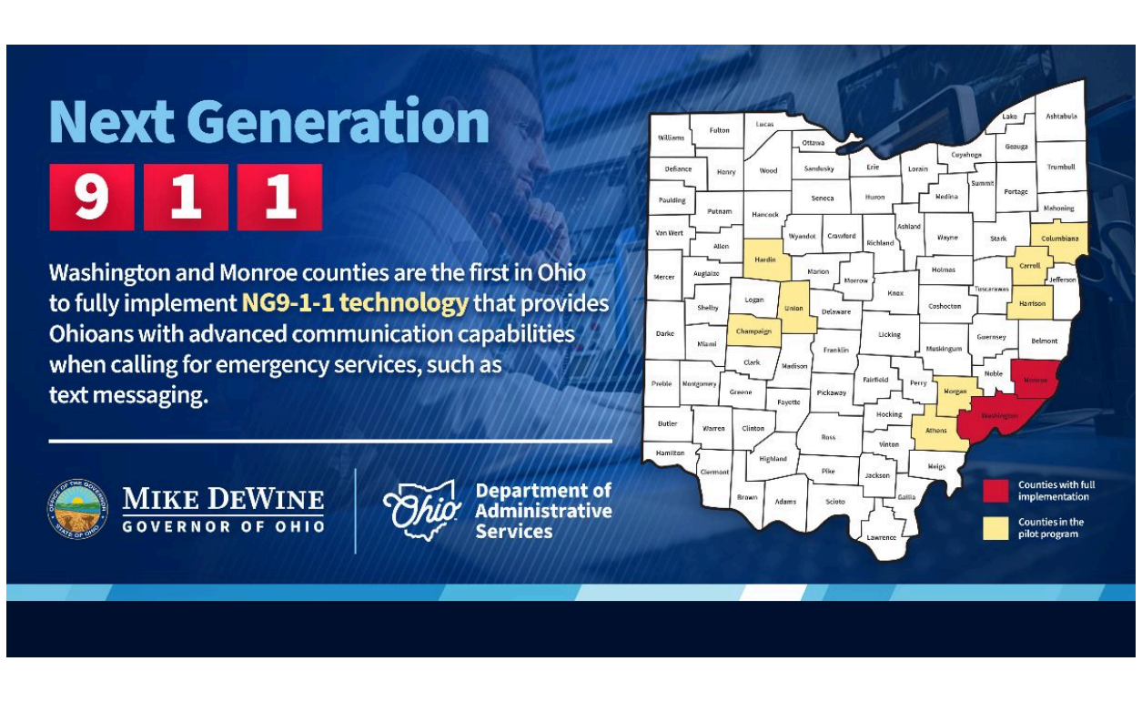
First counties come fully online to NG 9-1-1 System

Last week, Governor Mike DeWine announced that Monroe County and Washington County became the first counties in the state to fully implement the Next Generation 9-1-1 System.

NG9-1-1 technology provides Ohioans with advanced communication capabilities when calling for emergency services, such as text messaging. NG9-1-1 technology also supports more efficient emergency management by reducing the number of call transfers between 9-1-1 call centers with more precise identification of the location of callers using cell phones.

Other counties in the initial migration pilot program include Athens, Carroll, Champaign, Columbiana, Hardin, Harrison, Morgan, and Union counties.

Supporting the NG 9-1-1 rollout statewide is one of CCAO's top priorities heading into the 136th General Assembly's budget process.


Next Generation
9 1 1
Washington and Monroe counties are the first in Ohio to fully implement NG9-1-1 technology that provides Ohioans with advanced communication capabilities when calling for emergency services, such as text messaging.
MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO
Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Counties with full implementation
Counties in the pilot program

FINAL WEEK: New Elected Official and New Staff Fraud Reporting Training

The Auditor of State implemented a new training on fraud reporting last year. The training consists of an 8-minute video that is available on demand on the Auditor of State's website. All elected officials must take the training within 30 days of taking office, and then once every four years thereafter. County employees, and other public employees, must also take the training withing 30 days of their hire date and once every four years thereafter.

For new commissioners or council members who took office on January 2, 2025, the deadline to complete the training is February 1, 2025 (THIS SATURDAY).

For new commissioners or council members who took office on January 3, 2025, the deadline to complete the training is February 2, 2025 (THIS SUNDAY).

Elected officials are unable to delegate this training to another employee and must complete the training themselves.

Each elected official or public employee will register, watch the video, and then receive a CPE certificate of completion. Counties are responsible for collecting all certificates and retaining them for audit. Completion of training will be part of each county's audit for compliance. Counties may have multiple elected officials and/or employees watch the video at one time in a shared room if they choose to do so.

CCAO released a County Advisory Bulletin explaining the requirement. The Auditor of State Bulletin 2024-005 details the training and fraud reporting requirements.

If you have questions, please contact the AOS's Special Investigations Unit at (800) 282-0370 or by using this form online.

Outgoing Member Mentorship Videos Available on CCAO Website

CCAO Communications Coordinator Jessica Newbacher and Licking County Commissioner & CCAO Board Member Tim Bubb spent much of 2024 capturing interviews from some of our outgoing members. These videos are a valuable resource for our members as well as anyone who may be interested in running for an elected county position in the future. Outgoing members shared their experiences in office as well as their professional backgrounds and advice for future county commissioners, executives and council members.

Three interviews are currently live on the CCAO website. Sign in to your account and click "County Government Toolkit" at the top menu to watch them, and stay tuned for more videos!

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

PALMER ENERGY COMPANY

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

A letter from DCY Director Kara Wente on an upcoming virtual event regarding child care

Dear DCY Partner,

As you know through the Preschool Development Grant, we created a child care public private partnership to expand access to child care services through a partnership with private industry that supports workforce stability. This approach focuses on working families who struggle with child care access and costs, employers seeking to improve employee retention, and the state aiming to boost workforce participation. We are very appreciative of the work and interest our partners have created in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Licking, and Montgomery counties.

In an effort to make this opportunity available statewide there will be a new application for grant opportunity made available. The Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) is excited to continue development of a partnership to bring together businesses, child care providers, and government to find new ways to support employees and child care programs benefitting families, programs, and businesses.

The application for grant opportunity will be available to non-profit and government entities seeking to partner with a private business and child care provider to expand access to child care for employees. Through this opportunity, non-profit or government organizations may enter into partnerships with local businesses fostering collaborations with local child care programs. These partnerships are tailored to meet community needs and encompass flexible and diverse models supporting wage increases, access prioritization, cost sharing, and more.

We know that insufficient child care choices negatively impact parents, employers, and taxpayers. When families do not have the child care they need, parents' work productivity falls, resulting in costs to parents, employers, and ultimately taxpayers. We know that government alone cannot address the child care challenge. Through this partnership, we anticipate increased employee attendance, productivity and reduced turnover rates; enhanced access to consistent, high-quality child care for more children; and greater financial stability for child care programs.

I wanted to make you aware of this opportunity since it is another important tool in the toolbox to support child care programs, businesses, and families to ensure access to quality child care for working families in Ohio.

The application will be available on January 29, 2025.

Interested non-profit and government entities can join us for additional information at 1 p.m. on January 29 through a Live Teams event, which you can join here.

We hope you will join us to learn more about this opportunity as we all work to DO WHAT'S RIGHT FOR KIDS.

Thanks for your continued partnership.

Kara B. Wente
Director, Department of Children and Youth

Advanced registration open for NACo's 2025 Legislative Conference

The NACo Legislative Conference, which will be held from March 1 to 4, is open for Advanced Registration through February 14.

Advanced Registration for NACo member counties is $590 and for non-member counties is $830. These prices will increase to $705 and $980, respectively, after February 14.

The four-day event will feature meetings by NACo's policy steering committees which will consider resolutions and platform changes to shape NACo's federal advocacy priorities. Attendees will also have the opportunity to network with counterparts across the country, hear from subject matter experts, and visit with their federal delegations.

You can register, view the event schedule, and more on NACo's website.

For questions or assistance with registration, contact NACo via email at nacomeetings@naco.org or phone at 202.942.4292. If reaching out via email, please include "Leg Conference 2025" in the subject line.

NACo requests responses from counties on cyber security needs

Counties still have the opportunity to complete the NACo Cyber Security Survey. The goal of this survey is to collect data from counties, combine it into a report that shows the current state of cybersecurity, and identify where more help and funding are needed.

County input - from both IT leaders and elected officials - is vital to sharing the county perspective and needs around cyber security. This survey is designed for both technology leaders and elected officials, as NACo is looking for all perspectives.

Click HERE to complete the survey.

If you have any questions concerning the survey, please contact NACo CIO Rita Reynolds at rreynolds@naco.org.

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.

ODRC Jail Funding Application Question and Answer Webinar

House Bill 2, passed by the 135th General Assembly and signed by Governor DeWine, created capital appropriations for local county jails. The bill authorizes the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) to adopt guidelines to accept and review applications, require counties to justify the need for the capital project, and comply with timelines for submitting documentation for the project. The application period opened on December 9, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. and will close at 8:00 a.m. on March 3, 2025.

Please join CCAO and DRC for a question-and-answer webinar regarding the grant opportunity on Friday, January 31st, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. The webinar will be recorded and posted on CCAO's website for members who cannot attend.

CCAO members are highly encouraged to submit questions before the webinar. All questions should be submitted by the close of business on January 28th.

During the webinar, DRC staff will answer the questions submitted by counties regarding the application and grant opportunity. If you have a question to submit, please send it to CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org. Members will also have an opportunity to ask questions of ODRC staff on the webinar.

A link to register for the webinar can be found here.

AARP accepting applications for grant program to enhance liveability for older residents

AARP has opened its 2025 Community Challenge, a "quick-action" grant program open to nonprofit organizations and government entities. The program is intended to serve the needs of people age 50+, with particular prioritization for projects that make permanent physical improvements to the community, temporary demonstrations that can lead to long-term change, and innovative pilot and service programs.

Applications close on March 5, and funded projects must be completed by December 15.

The program has three constituent grant opportunities:

Flagship Grants
Capped at $25,000, these grants are intended for projects that enhance public places, increase transportation and mobility options, support housing options, enhance digital connections and literacy, and community resilience.

Capacity-Building Micrograms
Capped at $2,500 and paired with additional resources, these grants are intended for projects that train people aged 50+ for disaster preparedness, enhance the safety, walkability, and bikeability of communities, and support "lifelong homes."

Demonstration Grants
Capped at $25,000, these grants are intended for projects that enhance pedestrian safety, expand internet access, reconnect communities divided by infrastructure, and increasing housing choice for people aged 50+.

Since the program was started in 2017, local governments in Ohio that have received funding include the cities of Findlay, Lorain, Chillicothe, Cincinnati, and Cleveland Heights, multiple villages, and other local governments including the Colerain Township Fire and EMS District, the Cuyahoga County Metropolitan Housing Authority, and multiple county health departments.

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

Commissioners Hear From Residents Opposing Additional Gorham Township Solar Field
Village Reporter, January 18, 2025
Following the approval of items during the January 14th meeting, commissioners heard from Les Seiler, Andrea Christenson, and Jeff Canfield regarding their opposition to the proposed Ritter Station Solar Project.

Les Seiler spoke first and stated that he is a landowner and an advocate for sustainable farm practices.

Seiler voiced his concerns regarding the new large scale solar project in Gorham Township, especially due to the fact that there is already an 800 acre large scale solar field in the township. This new project will see an additional 1,700 acres of farmland converted into a solar field.

Seiler explained that, when you add the two projects up, that would mean close to 10% of all the land in Gorham Township would be solar fields.

Due to this, the concerns he raised included subsurface drainage issues, the useability of the farmland after the project has been completed, the effect it will have on the local deer and wildlife populations and movements, and what the removal of the land from agriculture use will do to local businesses.

According to Seiler, he has contacted a few people that work with such companies around the county, one being Gerald Grain.

He explained that this representative had told him that the company had filled three trains in seven days and were fairly proud of that.

Additionally, the company had received 1.6 million bushels of soybeans in a drought year, which has been a decent number.

Northeast District

Columbiana County commissioners eye sales tax renewal on May ballot
Salem News, January 23, 2025
Columbiana County commissioners unanimously agreed Wednesday to place renewal of the 1% sales tax on the May ballot, asking voters to continue the tax they're already paying.

"It's an existing tax, it's a continuation," Commissioner Tim Ginter said, adding that "it's not being raised. That's a testament to the good administration and use of the public's money.

Commissioners aren't asking for any additional funds. They just want the 1% sales tax that's already in place to continue for another five years. The 1% sales tax generates more than $14 million per year for the general fund, accounting for a large portion of the operating funds used for every office in the downtown courthouse, all the courts, the sheriff's office, the jail, the prosecutor's office and the board of elections.

"This isn't an attempt to scare people. It's simply an attempt to continue providing the services that fund has afforded us the ability to do in the past 30 years," Commissioner Mike Halleck said.

Voters overwhelming defeated the 1% sales tax on the November ballot, with commissioners attributing the loss to the wording, which was different than the last two times the sales tax was approved in 2019 and 2015.

Both Ginter and Halleck said the word "renewal" will be placed in the heading for the issue on the ballot, what Ginter referred to as the title.

"The word renewal is very important to this because that is exactly what it is," Halleck said.

They both indicated the idea is to have the word there for clarity. After the issue was defeated in November, commissioners said they spoke to people who didn't realize the sales tax was a renewal, they thought it was a new tax and that's why they voted against it.

Central District

One Door opening: Franklin County to streamline social services access
Columbus Dispatch, January 23, 2025
Franklin County is streamlining how residents access county social services by opening the One Door office.

The idea is residents can go through one door and meet with multiple county agencies in one office for help with obtaining jobs, paying child support and more.

One Door brings together the Office on Aging, Child Support Enforcement Agency, Job and Family Services, Justice Policy and Programs and Veterans Services.

Located on the first floor of the Michael J. Dorrian Building at 369 S. High St., the One Door is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners held a ribbon cutting for One Door on Tuesday.

"One Door isn't an ordinary transactional resource, it's a philosophy rooted in equity and designed to empower every resident," said Board President Erica C. Crawley. "This initiative is a game changer, meeting residents where they are with dignity, compassion, and opportunities to thrive."

Southwest District

Butler County leaders seek more funding for homeless services
WCPO, January 23, 2025
Despite the rising number of homeless people in Butler County, County Commissioner Cindy Carpenter feels service options are severely lacking.

Carpenter said that's largely due to the county receiving minimal funding from the state.

"I think that this is the biggest crisis that we have in Butler County," Carpenter said.

Carpenter points to state data compiled by the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC). The agency represents 80 rural counties in Ohio, including Butler County.

Numbers show Butler County had more unsheltered and sheltered homeless people than any other county in 2024.

Despite this, Carpenter said Butler County receives significantly less money for homeless services compared to other counties.

"Dayton gets $9 million, Akron gets $8 million," Carpenter said. "We get $1.4 [million]."

Southeast District

Possible headworks building site discussed by Jefferson County commissioners
The Herald Star, January 24, 2025
City officials got the go-ahead Thursday to do soil borings on a Jefferson County property to determine if it would be a suitable site for their new headworks building, though that's not a guarantee they will be given permission to use the site.

The headworks project involves construction of a new building equipped with automatic barscreens to remove things like rags and leaves from raw sewage, along with a new grit removal system to keep things like sand, small rocks and eggshells out. The new building and equipment are required to handle a lot more flow during wet weather to significantly reduce the amount of sewage and rainwater that goes to the river.

Wastewater Superintendent Chuck Murphy said the project is non-negotiable — the city must build it to satisfy the terms of a consent decree with Ohio EPA. The only questions are where it will be built and, ultimately, the cost.

Murphy said if they build it on city-owned property by the treatment plant, current estimates put the cost in the neighborhood of $51 million. Moving it across the railroad tracks, on the south side of the sheriff's department's parking lot would cost much less — around $30 million.

He told commissioners they'll be doing soil borings on both properties.

"We need to do soil borings so we can do a proper design and get approvals" from Norfolk Southern, Murphy said, adding the borings will be done at city expense.

Murphy reassured commissioners that doing soil borings doesn't mean the headworks would or could be built on their property. "You've just given us the okay to do the borings, then fill (the holes)," he said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

JANUARY 31
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 7
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 17
Presidents Day

FEBRUARY 24 - 27
CCAO New Member Training
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (February 25)

FEBRUARY 28
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 1 - MARCH 4
NACo Legislative Conference (Washington D.C.)

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