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February 10, 2025

Each of Ohio's 88 counties are officially America-250 Ohio Communities! The organization is spearheading Ohio's celebration of the United States' upcoming semiquincentennial and the unanimous support by Ohio's counties will help bring celebrations to Ohioans across the great Buckeye State!

Learn more about America-250 Ohio.

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

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Social Security Administration releases FAQs on Social Security Fairness Act

The Social Security Administration released Frequently Asked Questions on its website regarding the implementation of the Social Security Fairness Act. The Act, signed into law last month by President Biden, ends the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) in Social Security.

December 2023 is the last month that WEP and GPO will apply. This means that those rules no longer apply to benefits payable for January 2024 and later.

The webpage states: "SSA is finalizing its plan to implement the Act while limiting negative effects on our regular workloads and services to the public. We cannot yet provide an estimated timeframe for when we will adjust a person's past or future benefits, but we will continue to provide updates on this webpage. We thank the public for its patience."

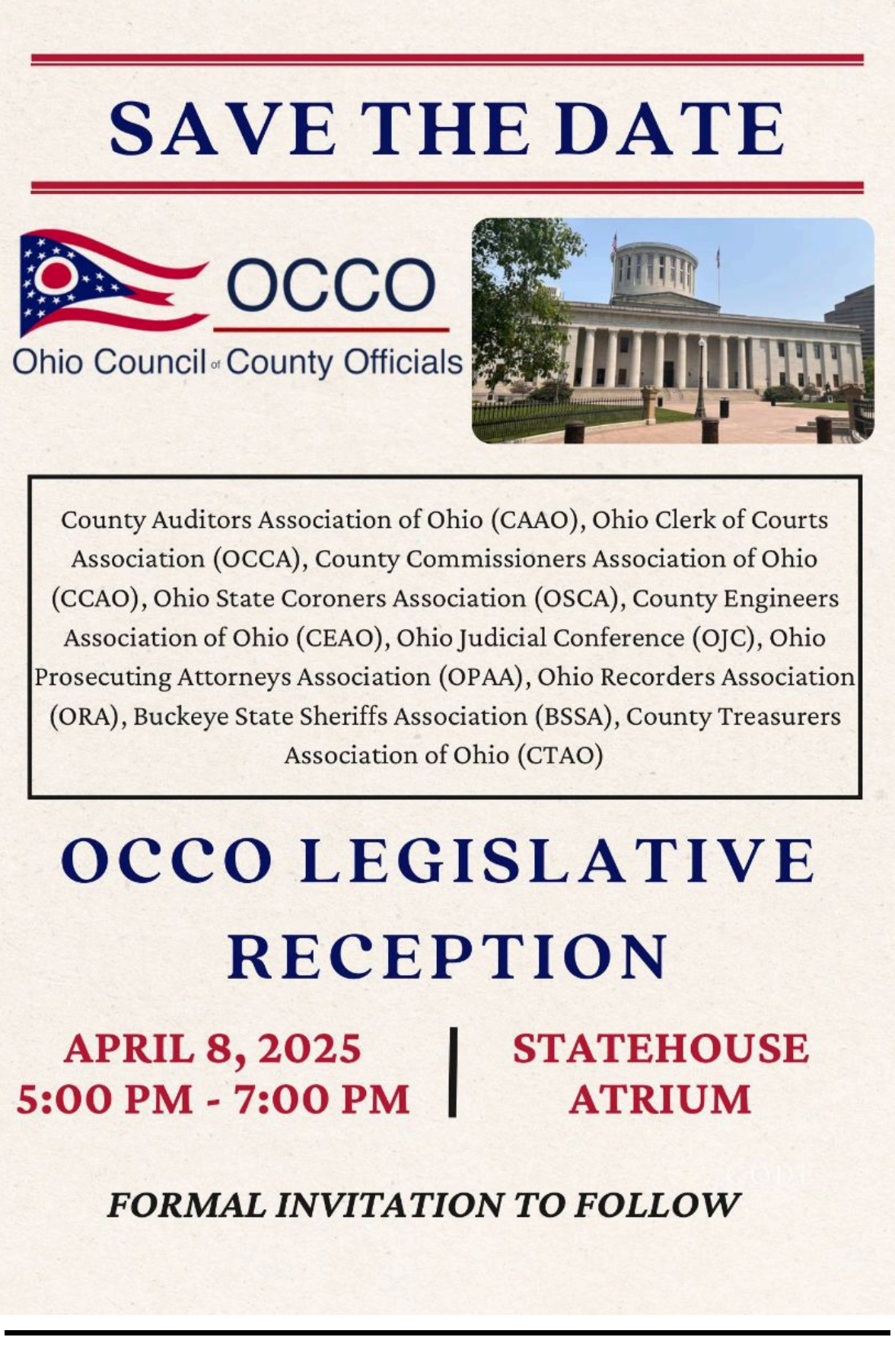
To view the FAQs, click here.

CCAO will continue to update members as we receive additional updates.

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!



SAVE THE DATE

OCCO
Ohio Council of County Officials

County Auditors Association of Ohio (CAAO), Ohio Clerk of Courts Association (OCCA), County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), Ohio State Coroners Association (OSCA), County Engineers Association of Ohio (CEAO), Ohio Judicial Conference (OJC), Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA), Ohio Recorders Association (ORA), Buckeye State Sheriffs Association (BSSA), County Treasurers Association of Ohio (CTAO)

OCCO LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

APRIL 8, 2025
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM | STATEHOUSE ATRIUM

FORMAL INVITATION TO FOLLOW

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

JobsOhio®
Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Governor's proposed budget released, CCAO analysis available

Last Monday, Governor Mike DeWine held a press conference announcing the Executive Budget. This is the first step in the budget process, which will culminate in the signing of a finished two-year operating budget in late June. While the budget is far from final, inclusion of policies in the Executive Budget is often a vital component of inclusion in the final budget.

Materials on the proposal, including the Blue Book, Highlights, fact sheets, and the latest Tax Expenditure Report, can be found on the Governor's website.

A full analysis can be found in last week's *Statehouse Report* or in CCAO's Bill Tracker.

CCAO's top priorities for this budget cycle are bolstering Ohio's child welfare system, reforming and fully funding the indigent defense system, supporting county jail construction and renovation, continuing the rollout of NG 9-1-1, and increasing access to child care.

Children Services
The budget proposal includes a $25 million increase in SFY 2026 and a $30 million increase in SFY 2027 in the State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA). These funds go directly to county public children services agencies for placement costs of children in foster care. Statewide placement costs rose 68 percent between 2020 and 2024, and this investment will help counties meet the challenge of paying appropriate placements.

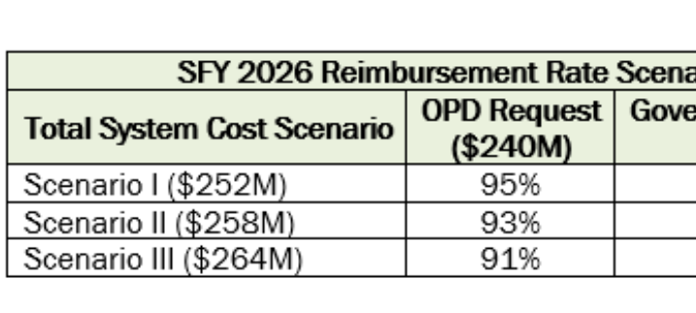
Additionally, the budget includes $20 million in SFY 2026 and $10 million in SFY 2027 to assist communities in starting child wellness campus. These are one-time funds and will be available regionally and to the major metro areas. The child wellness campuses would provide short-term treatment and care for multi-system youth at risk of custody relinquishment or in PCSA custody and unable to access timely, appropriate placements.

In addition to funding, CCAO has asked for transparency and stability in placement costs. During a presentation on Monday, DCY Director Kara Wente shared the budget will include language that authorizes the Department to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to establish statewide rates for placement and care of children eligible for foster care maintenance payments. A statewide RFP is intended to provide price transparency for placement options.

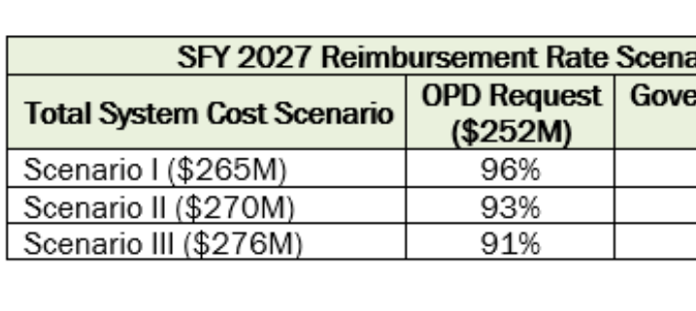
Indigent Defense
The budget includes funding for the Northwest Regional Hub pilot program to administer the indigent defense system in Allen, Hardin, and Putnam counties. This pilot program was a recommendation of two different task forces that studied the indigent defense system in recent years. The pilot program will provide a basis for potential expansion of direct state administration of the system in future budget cycles.

Unfortunately, the budget also provides only a negligible increase to the county reimbursement appropriation items ($800,000 in SFY 2026 and $5.2 million in SFY 2027). The Ohio Public Defender's estimate for the reimbursement rate for the remainder of the current state fiscal year is 78%. With no change to the reimbursement appropriation, next year's reimbursement rate will likely decrease.

The agency requested the reimbursement items to total $240 million in SFY 2026 and $252 million in SFY 2027. In its budget request, OPD estimated three scenarios to show the reimbursement rate that would result from potential total system costs. Since OPD provided these estimates, it is fair to say that the agency thinks total system costs at these levels are reasonable estimates. The table below contains these scenarios with both the funding level the agency requested, and the funding provided in the Governor's proposal.



SFY 2026 Reimbursement Rate Scenarios		
Total System Cost Scenario	**OPD Request ($240M)**	**Governor's Proposal ($197M)**
Scenario I ($252M)	95%	78.0%
Scenario II ($258M)	93%	76.2%
Scenario III ($264M)	91%	74.5%



SFY 2027 Reimbursement Rate Scenarios		
Total System Cost Scenario	**OPD Request ($252M)**	**Governor's Proposal ($202M)**
Scenario I ($265M)	96%	76.5%
Scenario II ($270M)	93%	74.8%
Scenario III ($276M)	91%	73.1%

The Governor's proposed budget's lack of funding for indigent defense reimbursement will harm county general funds as they must continue to cover a disproportionate share of a system that is a constitutional requirement of the state. CCAO urges the General Assembly to increase the funding for this purpose to at least the OPD request and will work with Representatives and Senators to stress the need for this funding.

County Jail Construction and Renovation
The Governor's proposal includes $154.9 million over the biennium for county jail projects. These funds come from the excise tax on adult-use marijuana. Governor DeWine indicated that budget bill will incorporate changes to the adult-use marijuana law that were included in House Bill 86 of the 135th General Assembly. (Read the LSC Fiscal Analysis of HB 86 here)

It is CCAO's understanding that the jail funding contained in the Governor's budget will be distributed through a Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) process in a manner similar to most of the prior jail funding rounds. The DRC-led approach enables flexibility for county match rates and is CCAO's preferred method.

Next Generation 9-1-1
The budget will complete construction of the state system and continue to provide operational funding. While not covered in materials released thus far, CCAO has been told that the provision sunsetting the access fee from $0.40 to $0.25 will be removed in the full legislative text.

Child Care
The budget proposes increasing the statutory eligibility for publicly funded child care from 145% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 160% of the FPL. Additionally, the Child Care Choice Voucher program will continue to provide publicly funded child care to families between 161% and 200% FPL. The Child Care Choice Voucher program was implemented last spring following Governor's DeWine's State of the State address. These initiatives are funded primarily with TANF and Child Care and Development Block Grant dollars.

DCY is also implementing several federal child care requirements during this biennium, including: capping parent co-pays at 7%; paying providers by enrollment; and paying at the 50th percentile of the 2024 market rate.

An additional child care support in the budget is the creation of a refundable child tax credit of up to $1,000 per child under the age of six. The credit, funded by an increase in the cigarette excise tax, is intended to aid parents who are working or in education.

TUESDAY: DCY to host Q&A session on child care public-private partnership program

Next Tuesday, the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) will host a Q&A session about its Early Care and Education Business Partnership program. The link to join the event is here, but it will not become live until the event starts at 1:00 p.m. on February 11.

In this partnership, businesses, government or non-profit entities, and DCY support the cost of increasing child care access to eligible families. This opportunity seeks to embrace creative ways for DCY to partner with businesses striving to address workforce issues, and support employees facing challenges accessing affordable, reliable child care. Examples of models include providing drop in child care options, or increasing non-traditional work hour care options.

When families do not have sufficient child care options, the ability to join the workforce is impacted, thereby shrinking the available pool of potential employees. Without flexible, reliable and affordable child care, parents may struggle to keep up with work, which can lead to lost productivity. This creates extra costs for everyone. The partnership aims to increase employee attendance, improve work performance, lower turnover rates, provide better child care options, and help child care centers meet parents and the workforce where they are.

The application and required budget information are available on DCY's website. It is encouraged that you review the documents before the Q&A session. Questions can be submitted in advance to jill.schuler@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov.

If you would like to sign up to receive updates on this and other programs directly from DCY, you may do so by completing this form.

Advanced registration for NACo's 2025 Legislative Conference ends Friday

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.

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.

WEDNESDAY: Development holding webinar on Brownfield Remediation Program

On February 12, the Department of Development will host a webinar to discuss the second award period for the Brownfield Remediation Program. The webinar will discuss program updates, eligibility requirements, and the application process. It will also feature time for a Q&A with program staff.

A total of $50 million is available in the second award period. Unlike the first period, there is no set-aside for counties; this period is entirely first-come, first-served. The application window will open on February 19.

You can register for the webinar here. The guidelines for the second award period are available here.

Tobacco control, Lake Erie forestry grants available

CCAO has posted two new grant opportunities on our website!

The Local Tobacco Prevention and Control Grant is open to local public health agencies and non-profits. It is intended to help fund projects that prevent young people from using tobacco and nicotine products, help users quit, and facilitate other tobacco use cessation efforts. A total of $3.9 million is available, and applications close on February 24.

The second opportunity, the Lake Erie Forestry Assistance Grant, is open to soil and water conservation districts in the Lake Erie watershed. It is intended to facilitate training and support between SWCDs and landowners on managing woodland resources. Awards are available for up to $20,000 each. Applications close on February 28.

DRC Jail Funding Application Question and Answer Webinar Recording Available

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.

CCAO and DRC held a webinar on January 31 to allow counties an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the application progress. A recording of the webinar is available on CCAO's Webinars page.

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

County buildings dominate discussion at Lima Rotary

LimaOhio, February 3, 2025

The Allen County Board of Commissioners has a hand in many areas of county governance, from establishing the budget for county government agencies to handling board appointments for numerous county agencies.

But as Commissioners Brian Winegardner and Cory Noonan spoke to the Lima Rotary Club about the state of the county, one area dominated the discussion: Capital projects.

The commissioners' appearance at Monday's Rotary Club meeting was part of a yearly tradition in which the commissioners deliver a "state of the county" presentation to club members. One area in which the state of the county is strong, according to the commissioners, is in the area of debt.

"The county does not have any debt," Noonan said. "We have debt prescribed to us through ditch projects and whatnot, but for capital projects for the county, we've paid off all the debt that we once had, so in that, we're in a very good position."

One of those projects discussed was the new county administration building project currently underway in downtown Lima across from the courthouse, a nearly $17 million project a long time in coming, Winegardner said.

Northeast District

Contract awarded for Elkton water, sewer line extension project

Morning Journal, February 6, 2025

Columbiana County commissioners awarded the contract for the Elkton water and sewer line extension project to Marucci & Gaffney Excavating Co. for $2,276,268.

Commissioners took the action Wednesday based on a recommendation from county Engineer Bert Dawson, with the Youngstown company submitting the lowest bid when bids were opened last week.

Other bidders included: Yarian Brothers Construction, New Waterford, $2,379,283; S.E.T., Inc., Lowellville, $2,556,859; and Rudzik Excavating, Struthers, $2,441,363.

Commissioner Mike Halleck commented that the project was three years in the making. Global Pak on Elkton Road was expanding and the idea of extending water and sewer service out that way was explored.

The water and sewer line extensions will serve Global Pak and a dozen households in the Elkton area.

County Chief Deputy Sanitary Engineer Troy Graft previously said the county received approval to install a utility bridge to bring the water and sewer lines over the Little Beaver Creek, which has the designation of a Wild & Scenic River.

The project will include 2,400 feet of force main for the sewer which will be pumped to the county's treatment plant near Elkton and a water line extension stretching 6,000 feet from Scroggs Road out to Elkton.

When contacted Wednesday, Graft said they'll be notifying Marucci & Gaffney about the award. Construction is supposed to be done by the end of 2025. The project will be funded through American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Central District

Officials vote down solar project

Morrow County Sentinel, February 5, 2025

At its Jan. 29 meeting, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to prohibit construction of "economically significant wind farms, large wind farms, and large solar facilities in all unincorporated areas of Perry Township."

More than 100 county residents, including about 40 from the Amish community, packed the meeting room at the Community Services Building. The commissioners voted following testimonies and evidence given by several residents of Perry Township and two representatives of the Total Energies Renewables and Power, USA LLC, who were applying to have a permit for the Woodbury solar project in Perry Township.

Perry Township Trustee Jake Meadows was the first of several who spoke against construction of the 1,063-acre solar outlay. Meadows pointed to the importance of farmland in the township and for the many Amish farmers in the community. This project would take away a large piece of acreage as well as having possible contaminated runoff, which would affect neighboring farms and residents.

Perry Township trustees had passed a resolution opposing the Woodbury solar project in November 2024 and submitted it to county commissioners. A petition signed by several hundred was also presented to the commissioners.

Southwest District

Montgomery County leaders concerned about child support license suspensions

Dayton Daily News, February 3, 2025

Montgomery County leaders have concerns with the practice of suspending driver's licenses for failure to pay child support.

The Dayton Daily News reported last week that for the third year in a row, Montgomery County suspended more residents' licenses for failing to pay child support than any other county in Ohio.

Last year, the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) issued 1,961 of the state's 15,841 license suspensions for child support defaults, according to Ohio JFS data obtained by the Dayton Daily News.

A new law slated to take effect this April — House Bill 29 — will permit those in default on their payments to present evidence that a suspension would effectively prevent them from getting current. This new law, however, doesn't require JFS departments to act on that information.

Republican county Commissioner Mary McDonald said she considered the passage of H.B. 29 a win for working Ohioans.

"I understand the need to incentivize people paying support but I feel taking their license away will only compound the challenge," she said. "I'm glad to see Ohio move in the direction of supporting people rather than having them set up for catastrophic failure."

Although she wants to see the number of suspensions decrease and feels the new law could contribute to a decline, McDonald also feels Montgomery County Job and Family Services should be able to use the option "when necessary."

"I believe having the option to petition the court for driving privileges will help parents stay employed while still holding them accountable for their obligations," she said. "When parents who are making an effort can keep working, they are in a better position to stay on top of their payments."

When asked about license suspensions due to missed child support payments, Montgomery County Commissioner Judy Dodge, a Democrat, said Tuesday that she thinks they can create barriers for parents.

Southeast District

Jefferson County approves land swap for airport safety fencing project

WTOV, February 5, 2025

A safety measure to protect aircraft using the Jefferson County Airport from animals getting in the way was before Jefferson County commissioners on Wednesday.

Commissioners gave permission for the airport authority to do a property swap for fencing and safety.

"Thanks to the Clemmans family for doing that," Commissioner Tony Morelli said. "They could have said 'no' and held up the whole project. So, appreciate them. The Port Authority was involved also. We want to thank Robert Naylor. And I think you're going to see that fence going up pretty quick. But it's a big job. It goes all the way around the whole area."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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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.)

MARCH 14
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 21
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

April 4
CEBCO Annual Business Meeting

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