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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES NACo
COUNTIES CURRENT
CCAO

March 3, 2025

At NACo's Legislative Conference, Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne led a discussion among county officials whose counties face a unique set of challenges and opportunities along the Great Lakes.

Pictured are CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne, Ashtabula County Commissioner Casey Kozlowski, and CCAO Policy Analyst James Kennedy.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Former Sandusky County Commissioner passes away

Former Sandusky County Commissioner Kay E. Reiter passed away at the age of 71 on February 14.

Kay served her community in a myriad of ways. She worked as a nurse for multiple physician private practices, was the Director of Physician Services for Memorial Health System and the Director of the Memorial Hospital Foundation.

In addition to serving as a Sandusky County Commissioner, Kay also served as a Ballville Township Trustee, was a member of the Terra State Community College Governing Board, the Executive Director of the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation, and the CEO & President of the Sandusky County Chamber of Commerce.

You can view Kay's obituary here.

Victim Services Funding survey

One of the budget amendments that CCAO is working on, in conjunction with the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA), is an appropriation increase for victim services funding. Legislators have advised CCAO and OPAA that advancing the amendment would be aided by knowing how much counties have spent on victim services out of the general fund in recent years.

CCAO has put a survey in the field, available here, to gather this information.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4.

County Risk Sharing Authority (CORSA) has an opening for a Risk Control Consultant position

Job responsibilities include assisting members, elected officials and department heads with assessing and mitigating risks of loss. Identify loss trends and make recommendations for programs that address program-wide loss trends.

Note: This position will almost exclusively involve aiding Sheriff's Offices, including jails.

Job qualifications include:

- Bachelor's Degree in Business, Criminal Justice, or a related field;
- 3-5 years' experience in law enforcement;
- A valid Ohio Driver's License; and
- The ability to meet insurance requirements.

You may request a full copy of the Risk Control Consultant job description by contacting Frank Hatfield, CORSA Assistant Director, fhatfield@ccao.org.

If you are interested in applying for this position, please submit a resume to Frank at the above email and include your salary expectation.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Ethics Commission Advisory: Domestic partners are family members

The Ohio Ethics Commission recently released its first advisory opinion of 2025. Advisory Opinion 2025-01 concerns the definition of "family member" for the purposes of "family hire" restrictions.

The Advisory finds that "domestic partners" fall within the definition of family since they are in a common law marital relationship or otherwise cohabitates. This means that an elected or appointed official is prohibited from using their authority to benefit a domestic partner in the same way they are prohibited from doing so for a spouse, child, or other relation.

The full opinion is accessible here.

USDA to invest up to $1 billion in bird flu mitigation efforts

Last week, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a five-pronged approach to addressing the outbreak of avian flu that has heavily hit poultry farmers in Ohio and other states.

USDA plans to:

1. Increase biosecurity measures for poultry producers, including covering up to 75% of biosecurity costs (up to $500 million).
2. Increase relief aid to farmers by offering up $400 million for the remainder of the federal fiscal year (ends September 30).
3. Remove regulatory burdens to expand supply for eggs to reduce costs to consumers.
4. Invest in vaccine and treatment research to reduce the spread and need to kill infected chickens (up to $100 million in investments)
5. Consider temporary import-export options to reduce costs on consumers.

You can read more details about these prongs on USDA's website.

Medicaid work requirement waiver submitted to CMS

On Friday, Governor Mike DeWine and Director of Medicaid Maureen Corcoran announced that the Department of Medicaid submitted a proposal to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to allow the state to reinstate a work requirement for individuals receiving Medicaid expansion benefits.

If CMS grants the waiver, Medicaid expansion enrollees would need to be at least 55 years old and either employed, in education or training, in a recovery program, or have a serious physical or mental illness.

The state was required to seek a reinstatement of the work requirements under a provision of House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly.

Auditor of State issues bulletin on cannabis revenue

Last week, Auditor of State Keith Faber issued Bulletin 2025-003 regarding cannabis revenue.

The bulletin is directed to municipalities and townships and concerns information distributed to these local governments from the Host Community Cannabis Fund.

While counties are not implicated by the bulletin since counties do not receive revenue from the Host Community Fund, you may wish to ensure that other local governments in your county are aware of the bulletin to ensure they properly adhere to accounting standards.

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.

CSH Ohio and OMHAS to host webinar on rental subsidy and supportive housing

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) Ohio and representatives from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services will host a webinar about the HUD 811 rental subsidy program and how supportive housing residents who are ready to transition can integrate this opportunity into their Moving On efforts.

The webinar will take place on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, from 10 to 11 a.m. Topics include:

- How the HUD 811 program works
- Eligibility criteria
- Becoming a HUD 811 referral agent
- Utilizing the HUD 811 program as part of your Moving On strategy
- Key components of a Moving On strategy

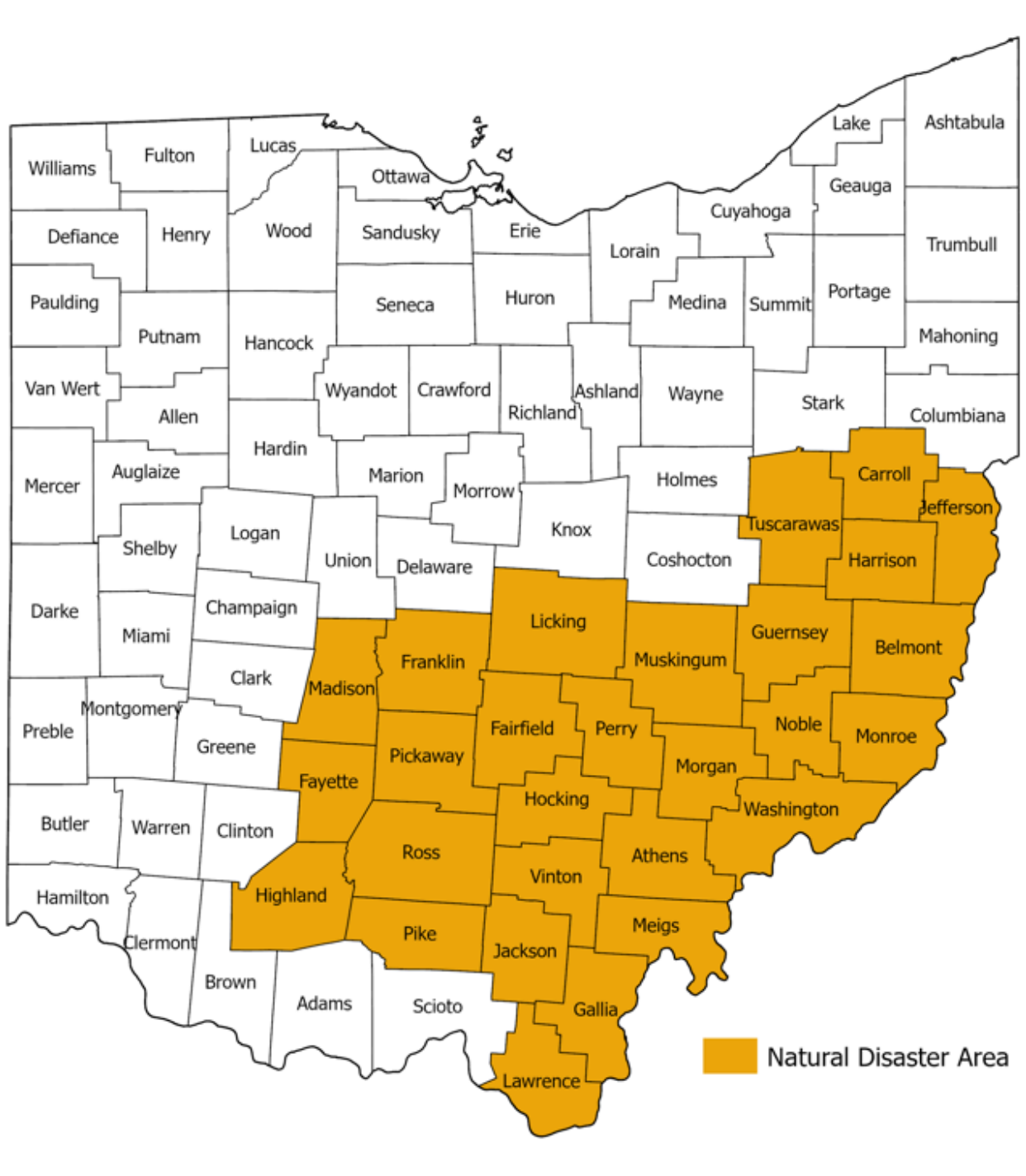
One of the main reasons supportive housing residents remain in supportive housing is the lack of access to affordable housing. The HUD 811 program ensures affordability for low-income residents with disabilities, aged 18-62, for qualifying properties funded with Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

Registration is free and can be completed here.

Drought assistant funding available to farmers in 28 counties

Drought assistance funds are available through the Ohio Department of Agriculture to help farmers recover from the 2024 drought. $10 million is available for farmers in 28 counties (see the map below) and is available to both crop farmers and livestock producers.

The application period closes on April 1. The program will primarily be administered through soil and water conservation districts, so the Department of Agriculture encourages farmers to reach out to their SWCD to discuss eligibility and how to apply.



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

Board approves contract between northwest Ohio jail, ICE

WTOL, February 21, 2025

The Corrections Center of Northwest Ohio (CCNO) Board voted to approve a contract between the jail and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a move that would allow the federal agency to incarcerate people who are in the country illegally.

Wednesday's vote passed 8-2 and was conducted by a commissioner and the sheriff from each of the five counties that use CCNO: Lucas, Fulton, Williams, Henry and Defiance counties.

The proposed contract would allow ICE to use up to 96 beds at CCNO to house detainees. In a press release from CCNO Wednesday, the jail's board said discussions for this contract began in August 2023, when the jail said it was seeking options for filling available beds.

According to the release, three of CCNO's housing units are currently shut down. These are where ICE's detainees would be held.

"This is normal for us," said CCNO Executive Director Dennis Sullivan in the release. "We've partnered with other agencies or facilities since the 1990s to fill beds."

The agreement with ICE will fall under the jail's existing contract with the US Marshals. ICE will pay the jail $117 per day for each inmate, in addition to mileage and officer transport time.

In addition to its contract with the US Marshals, CCNO said it has agreements with the Bureau of Prisons and Findlay Municipal Court, as well as several other facilities and agencies in the past.

Northeast District

Commissioners talk budget priorities with state and federal representatives

Star Beacon, February 28, 2025

State Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur met with the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners during a work session Thursday afternoon to discuss local priorities in the state budget.

State Representative David Thomas was not able to attend due to a last-minute schedule conflict, Commissioner Casey Kozlowski said.

Fowler Arthur said State Senator Sandra O'Brien had an out-of-town commitment as well.

Beth Bigham, northeast Ohio regional representative for Senator Bernie Moreno, also attended the meeting.

"The purpose of this meeting is to just talk with our elected officials," Commissioner J.P Ducro said in opening the meeting.

Kozlowski said he believes it is important the state keep reimbursement for indigent court representation high. He said the county is responsible for $1.7 to $1.8 million a year, to pay for people who can't fund their own defense.

He said the rate of funding has fluctuated from ranges around 40-100%.

"It is important to be close to 100% [reimbursement]," Kozlowski said.

He asked Fowler Arthur to support an amendment that would put it around 90%.

Kozlowski also asked Fowler Arthur to battle to keep a cell phone charge that helps fund 911 services.

"The state is telling us we have do stuff, but the funding doesn't necessarily trickle down," he said.

Kozlowski also asked Fowler Arthur to fight for state money to be used for new or rehabilitated jail projects.

Commissioner Kathryn Whittington asked Fowler Arthur to fight to keep Governor Mike DeWine's budget request for Children Services funding for 2026 at $25 million and $30 million for 2027. "We need to keep this. Ohio is way down in [children services] funding."

She also requested money for Victims of Crime Awareness programs that have been getting smaller yearly.

Central District

Knox County commissioners ban solar energy projects in 20 townships

Knox Pages, February 27, 2025

The Knox County commissioners heeded the townships' wishes, passing a resolution on Thursday banning utility-scale solar in 20 townships.

The commissioners will decide solar projects in Middlebury and Wayne townships on a case-by-case basis.

The resolution bans wind projects countywide.

Commissioner Barry Lester said that after last week's public hearing, he thought about the line between big government and representing the people.

"They took the time to show up and address their townships' thoughts, and they represent their constituents," he said of the trustees who spoke at the hearing.

Lester proposed honoring the exclusionary zone requests of the 20 townships and the pro-solar stance of the other two.

Southwest District

Nearly 14 million birds lost in leading ag counties

Daily Advocate, February 24, 2025

The rate at which HPAI (avian flu) has spread across the number one and number two agricultural counties in the state appears to have slowed, but that could be a result of the damage that has already been done by disease. However, the numbers have continued to increase since the early part of February.

Between the two counties, the number of birds euthanized because of the avian flu hitting local poultry producers is nearing 14 million. As of Feb. 22, there were 13,842,383 birds destroyed. The most recent round included over three million layers in Darke County and nearly 400,000 layers in Mercer County.

In total, since Christmas, Darke County has lost 7,365,970 layers while Mercer County has lost 5,161,398 layers. Mercer County's turkey population has decreased significantly with 286,449 turkeys euthanized and Darke County has had 126,121 turkeys depopulated. Darke County leads Mercer County in the number of pullets affected by the avian flu with 889,845 pullets euthanized compared to its northern neighbor's 19,985 pullets.

It was recently announced that Mercer County also has Ohio's first known human case of avian flu. The press release from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) states, "The Ohio Department of Health is reporting the state's first probable human case of influenza A(H5), also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), or bird flu. An adult male Mercer County farm worker who was in contact with deceased commercial poultry was infected with the virus."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the current risk of bird flu for the general public to be low. However, people with close and prolonged, unprotected contact with infected birds are at greater risk. ODH shared the best way to prevent bird flu is to avoid direct contact with wild birds or sick or dead poultry or other animals.

Southeast District

Commissioners accept quote to digitize county documents

Times Leader, February 26, 2025

Belmont County hired a firm to digitize certain public records on Tuesday.

The regular Belmont County Board of Commissioners meeting was moved from 10 a.m. Wednesday to 9 a.m. Tuesday due to recently elected Commissioner Vince Gianangeli attending the County Commissioners Association of Ohio training for new county commissioners across the state of Ohio.

"Our association does a phenomenal job, honestly, with everything that it does — our annual meeting, weekly updates and daily updates. They do a tremendous job. So I'm sure it's going to be a good conference, and then I happen to head into Washington, D.C., for some energy meetings, and then some D.C. visits as well, starting later today. So it's the only day we kind of get the gang together here, get this meeting in," Commissioner J.P. Dutton said.

He then made a motion to accept a quote from Kofile to digitize Volumes No. 23-29 for the Belmont County Clerk of Courts for $27,738.

Dutton added that the cost will be covered by American Rescue Plan Act funds.

"We made some motions late in the year for the remaining balance of our ARPA funds. Some of that was internal type procedures with the clerk of courts, the recorder and also the auditor," Dutton said. "Digitizing a lot of documents will provide better access for the general public moving forward, so it's another good project from the county clerk's office."

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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MARCH 14
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 21
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

April 4
CEBCO Annual Business Meeting

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