Counties Current
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
CCAO

June 9, 2025

Last week, Harrison County celebrated the grand opening of its new jail. Governor Mike DeWine joined Commissioners Amy Norris, Dustin Corder, Paul Prevot, former Sheriff Ronald J. Myers, and Sheriff Mark A. Touville to tour the facility and mark this public safety milestone.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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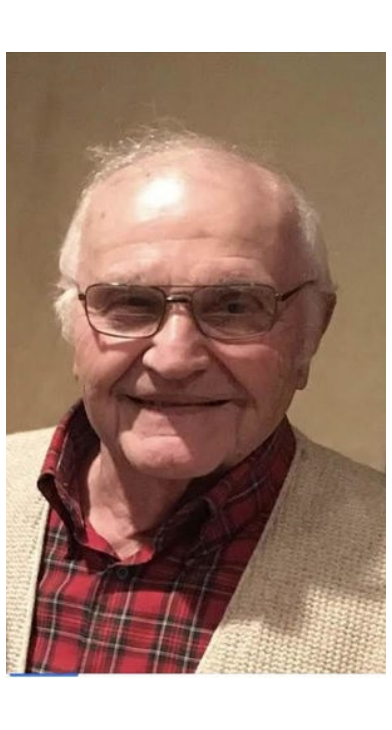
Former Hancock County Commissioner, father of former Hancock County Commissioner, passes away at the age of 90



Last week, former Hancock County Commissioner Wayne Pepple passed away at the age 90. He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Shirely, as well as four children, eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

In 2020, the Pepple Homestead received recognition for 150 years of continuous family ownership and operation. In addition to his career as a farmer, Wayne also had a career with the First National Bank of Findlay, where he eventually served as Vice President of Real Estate and Farm Loans.

Wayne served as Hancock County Commissioner from 1981 to 1984. Exactly 40 years later, his son Michael Pepple would also serve a term as Hancock County Commissioner, making the Pepples one of the few known parent-child pairs to serve as county commissioners for the same county.

You can view Wayne's full obituary here.

CEBCO announces Hinkle as Managing Director

CEBCO, a member-owned, self-insured risk sharing pool offering a vast array of wellness and health management services to Ohio counties, is pleased to announce the promotion of Kevin Hinkle to the role of Managing Director, Health and Wellness, effective June 1, 2025. This transition follows the retirement of Mike Kindell after 11 years of dedicated service.

In his new role, Hinkle will lead the daily operations of CEBCO and be responsible for the management and strategic growth of the consortium. With over 30 years of experience in the health insurance industry, Hinkle joined the CEBCO Team as Assistant Director in October 2023.

"Kevin Hinkle has demonstrated outstanding leadership, deep knowledge, and a strong commitment to serving counties," said County Commissioners Association of Ohio Executive Director, Cheryl Subler. "His promotion to Managing Director of CEBCO reflects our full confidence in his ability—and that of his team—to continue the important and valued work of delivering high-quality, cost-effective employee benefits for our member counties."

Prior to joining CEBCO, Hinkle spent the previous 17 years as Regional Vice President of Sales at Anthem and held various other positions within Anthem for over a decade prior. Hinkle is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Economics Management. He has previously served on the boards of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Central Ohio Diabetes Association, Access Health Columbus, and Ohio Wesleyan Alumni Association.

House bill to eliminate inside millage, make other significant changes to property taxation introduced

This article is reprinted from the June 6, 2025, edition of Statehouse Report.

Last week, Representative David Thomas introduced House Bill 335. HB 335, if passed, would make the widest sweeping changes to Ohio's property tax system in decades. The bill has five elements: it incorporates three existing bills regarding property tax changes and makes two new changes.

The most significant change the bill makes is the elimination of inside millage authority for counties, municipalities, and school districts (along with any other miscellaneous entities that receive inside millage), effective for tax year 2025. HB 335 allows townships to retain their current inside millage rate, largely because property taxation is the only revenue source for townships.

The Legislative Service Commission (LSC) estimates that the elimination of inside millage for these entities would result in a property tax cut totaling at least $3.5 billion annually (with the figure increasing as property values increase). Counties account for $853.1 million of that total.

To mitigate the revenue loss, the bill allows counties to levy up to an additional 1% of sales tax. This would increase the total county sales tax authority to 2.50%, leviable in increments of 0.05%. Any increase in sales tax using this new authority would need voter approval. A preliminary estimate by CCAO staff is that the median county would need to levy 0.55% of additional sales tax to offset revenue loss from inside millage elimination. Twelve counties (Brown, Carroll, Harrison, Henry, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Morrow, Noble, Paulding, Perry, and Vinton) would be unable to completely offset the revenue loss.

In addition to the overarching concern of the significant revenue reduction for county operations that the bill would cause, there are two additional points of concern that CCAO would like to note at this time.

The first is the general timeline of revenue loss and potential offsetting sales tax increases. Given the timing of property tax revenue payments and the timeline for new voted sales tax levies, counties may not be able to replace any portion of the lost revenue for six months at best, or for increasing increments of six months depending on subsequent votes.

The inside millage reduction is effective beginning in tax year 2025, which is the current year. Distribution of TY 2025 property tax revenue occurs in 2026, with the first payment typically being distributed in February. Counties would effectively begin experiencing the loss of inside millage at that payment.

Meanwhile, if a county opts to see a sales tax increase, it would need to submit the resolution to put the issue on the ballot to its board of elections by August 6. If the vote in November is successful, the increased rate would first be collected on April 1 and would first be distributed to counties on June 1. If a county places the vote on the May 2026 ballot, it would not receive revenue from the new sales tax rate until December 1.

The second aspect of inside millage elimination that the Association wants to highlight at this time is the effect on loan debt service. According to the Department of Taxation, at least 11 counties use a portion of inside millage revenue for debt service. Depending on the individual debt agreements, the loss of inside millage revenue may have a number of effects, including credit rating decreases, increased cost of credit moving forward, or potential debt default.

The other components of HB 335 are incorporating House Bill 129 (adding additional factors into the calculation of a school district's 20-mill floor), House Bill 186 (generally limiting a school district's 20-mill floor revenue increase to inflation), and House Bill 309 (clarifying and expanding the authority of the county budget commission to revise rates of voted property tax levies). The bill also includes permissive authority for counties to double the homestead exemption benefit to eligible taxpayers. Any foregone revenue from a county permissive homestead exemption expansion would not be reimbursed by the state. CCAO has testified in support of House Bill 129 and has a number of platform positions on property tax reform including allowing deferral programs and the creation of a circuit breaker to prevent tax bills from becoming unaffordable.

CCAO has discussed House Bill 335 and its implications in the Tax and Finance Committee, has met spoken with Representative Thomas, and will be meeting again with Representative Thomas, as well as Representative Bill Roemer (the chairman of House Ways and Means) and House majority caucus staff on Tuesday to discuss the bill further.

If you have questions about the bill or would like to share information about its potential impact on your county, please contact the Policy Team at policy@ccao.org.

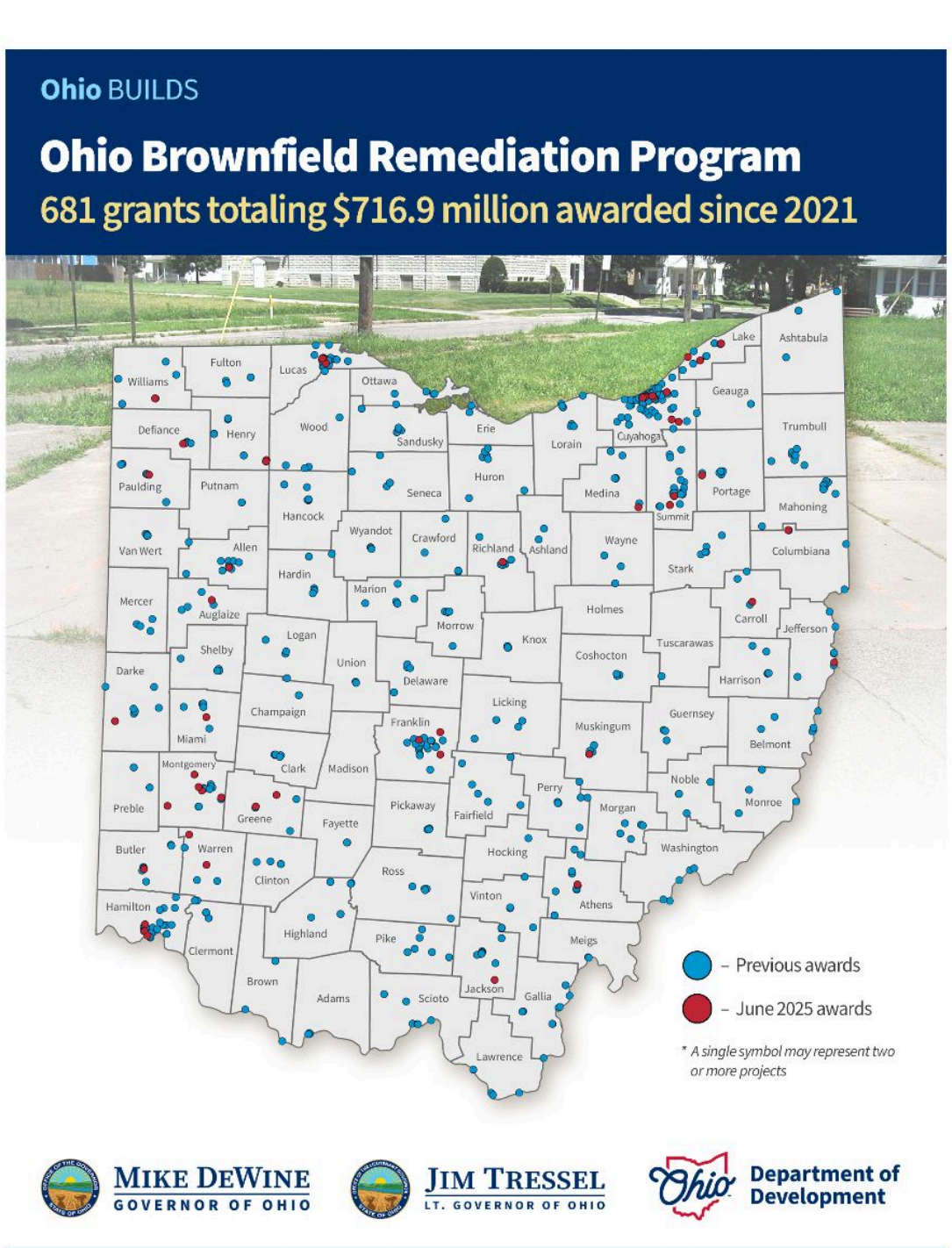
Latest round of Brownfield Remediation grants awarded to 51 projects

Last week, the DeWine-Tressel Administration announced the awarding of grants under the latest round of the Brownfield Remediation Program. The awards are for 43 cleanup/remediation projects and eight assessment projects.

Some of the projects are highlighted below. A full list of projects can be found here.

- Auglaize County - $1.1 million to remediate and demolish the former Auglaize County Nursing Home to prepare the site for redevelopment as a privately-operated nursing and assisted living center.
- Columbiana County - $202,261 to remove two underground storage tanks and to analyze the soil at the site of a former flour mill and gas station.
- Cuyahoga County - $1.2 million to complete the final closure of an abandoned construction and demolition debris landfill and convert the site to a community solar project.
- Henry County - $857,935 to remediate a former metal casting facility, including the excavation and removal of 800 tons of contaminated soil.
- Montgomery County - $1.8 million to remove asbestos and complete interior demolition at a mall and redevelopment the site to, among other things, provide space for the Funk Music Hall of Fame.
- Williams County - $414,851 to remove asbestos and partial demolish a former school building as part of a school district's redevelopment plan.

The Brownfield Remediation Program was initially created in 2021 and has since awarded $716.9 million for 681 projects across the state. The map below shows all the sites that have received funding since the program's start.



Registration open for 2025's Summer Symposium!

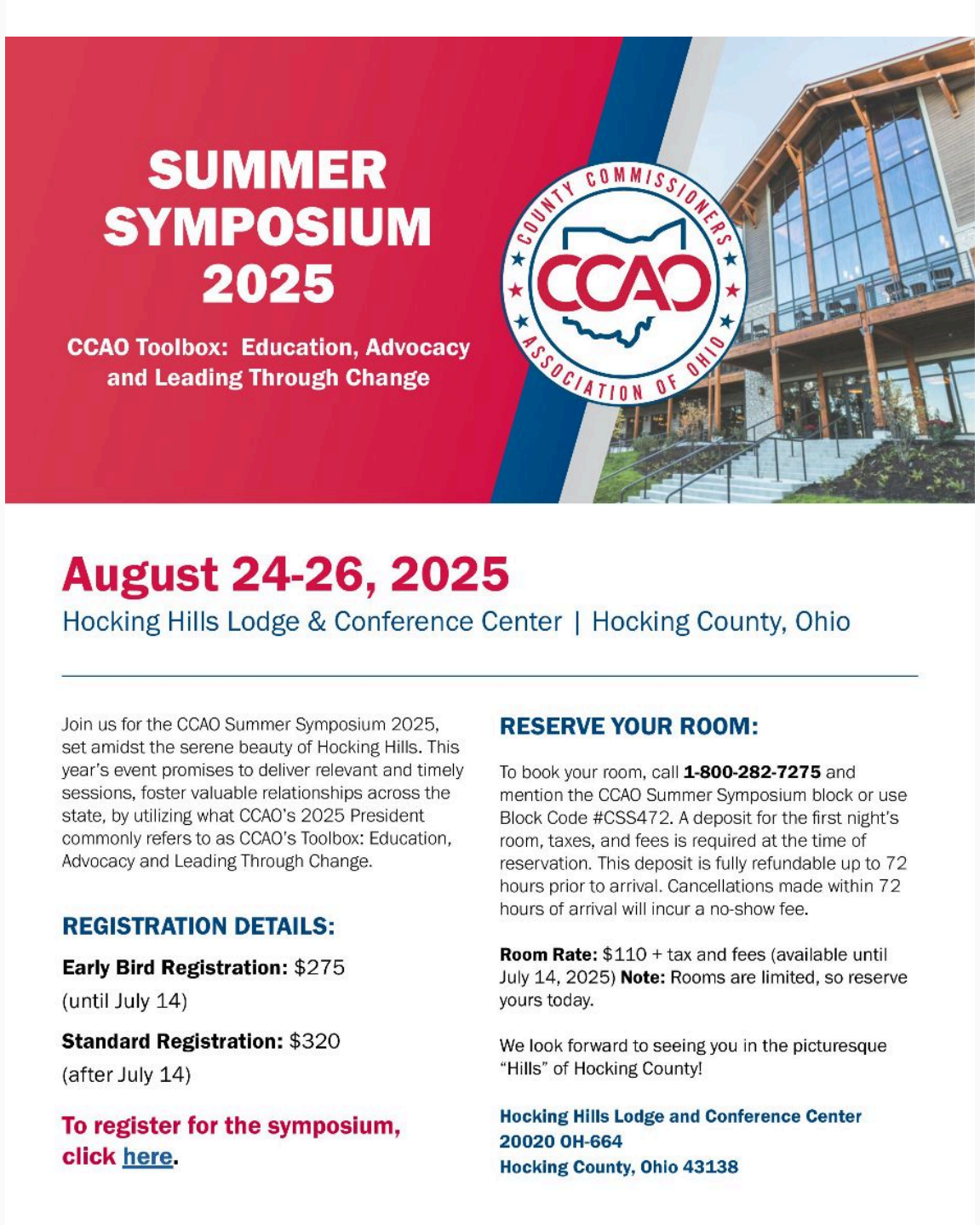
CCAO Summer Symposium 2025 Registration and Reservations are now open! Click on the announcement below or here to get started on your registration today!

The Hocking County Commissioners will be offering a tour of downtown Logan for those arriving on Sunday. The tour includes transportation to and from the lodge to downtown Logan, where attendees will visit their famous pencil sharpener museum, walk past the Hocking County Courthouse to their newly renovated theater then to 58 West for refreshments and food.

There will be plenty of time during the tour to visit other local establishments along the way. Please be sure to check the box when registering for the optional tour if you would like to join the tour Sunday evening!

We look forward to gathering together at Hocking Hills Lodge and Conference Center this summer to reconnect and discuss important topics. The official agenda is still under construction but will be released soon.

Please visit our Events page on our website for future updates!


SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2025
CCAO Toolbox: Education, Advocacy and Leading Through Change
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
CCAO

August 24-26, 2025

Hocking Hills Lodge & Conference Center | Hocking County, Ohio

Join us for the CCAO Summer Symposium 2025, set amidst the serene beauty of Hocking Hills. This year's event promises to deliver relevant and timely sessions, foster valuable relationships across the state, by utilizing what CCAO's 2025 President commonly refers to as CCAO's Toolbox: Education, Advocacy and Leading Through Change.

REGISTRATION DETAILS:

Early Bird Registration: $275
(until July 14)

Standard Registration: $320
(after July 14)

To register for the symposium, click here.

RESERVE YOUR ROOM:

To book your room, call **1-800-282-7275** and mention the CCAO Summer Symposium block or use Block Code #CSS472. A deposit for the first night's room, taxes, and fees is required at the time of reservation. This deposit is fully refundable up to 72 hours prior to arrival. Cancellations made within 72 hours of arrival will incur a no-show fee.

Room Rate: $110 + tax and fees (available until July 14, 2025) **Note:** Rooms are limited, so reserve yours today.

We look forward to seeing you in the picturesque "Hills" of Hocking County!

Hocking Hills Lodge and Conference Center
20020 OH-664
Hocking County, Ohio 43138

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Federal Advocacy: SNAP Changes in Reconciliation Package

Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1, the federal reconciliation budget package, by a vote of 215-214. The package includes several policy changes, which are summarized here. The U.S. Senate will now consider the bill and likely make several changes.

CCAO and the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association (OJFSDA) have partnered to advocate regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provisions of the bill. If passed in its current form, the legislation would:

- Reduce the federal match for SNAP administration from 50% to 25%, resulting in a statewide increase of $65 million, up to $40 million of which could fall to the responsibility of the county JFS agencies without an additional revenue source.
- Require the state to contribute to the cost of SNAP benefits on a sliding scale, based on the statewide SNAP error rate. In Ohio, this could be up to $800 million in each fiscal year.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Human Services Administrators (NACHSA) sent letters to House leadership prior to the vote expressing concerns over the changes. CCAO also shared information with Ohio's congressional delegation regarding the proposal's specific impact on Ohio budgets.

Our advocacy now turns toward the U.S. Senate. CCAO sent a letter to Senator Jon Husted and Senator Bernie Moreno to share our concerns about the impact of the SNAP provisions on county administration and budgets. We urge our members to share information about the local impact your county will feel if these changes become law. Below are some statewide talking points that might be useful in your conversations:

SNAP federal match reduction

- H.R. 1 would reduce the federal match for SNAP administration from 50% to 25%.
- If no other administrative factors changed, Ohio's portion of the costs would increase by $65 million per fiscal year.
- In Ohio, the state and counties share the cost of administration. This shift could increase administrative costs by up to $40 million per fiscal year for counties.
- County budgets are already tight, and this would put a strain on an already underfunded system.

SNAP state benefit cost share

- H.R. 1 would require states to contribute to the cost of SNAP benefits beginning in Federal Fiscal Year 2028, which is State Fiscal Year 2028. The required state share increases if a state has a higher error rate.
- **Ohio would likely need to contribute at least $640 million per state fiscal year, but depending on Ohio's error rate, this amount could rise to $800 million per state fiscal year**.
- H.R. 1 also reduces the tolerance level for SNAP errors from $37 in 2014 dollars ($57 in 2024) to $0, meaning all states' error rates would likely increase. If Ohio's error rate increases, the state would pay a higher cost-share percentage.

If you have questions about the SNAP provisions, please contact Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org. If you have questions about other provisions of H.R. 1, please contact policy@ccao.org.

DeWine-Husted Administration issues grant awards on broadband access, pedestrian safety infrastructure, and homelessness prevention

In the last two weeks, the DeWine-Tressel Administration has announced the awards of grants under multiple programs that will benefit counties, although not allocated to governments themselves. These include broadband access grants, pedestrian infrastructure safety grants, and homeless prevention grants.

Broadband Access
Last week, the Administration announced the awarding of grants through the Broadband Pole Replacement and Undergrounding Program, which reimburses internet service providers (ISPs) for up to 75% of the cost to replace poles, install mid-span poles, and/or undergrounding of cables/fiber if the project supports unserved areas.

The grants will go to six projects:

- Ohio Gig received $18.5 million for broadband infrastructure costs that will serve Belmont, Clinton, Delaware, Hardin, Union, and Warren counties.
- Charter Communications received $3.0 million for costs serving 13 counties, mostly in southeast Ohio.
- South Central Power received $1.4 million for costs serving Belmont, Harrison, Highland, and Monroe counties.
- Logan County Gig received $303,304 for costs serving Logan County.
- Southern Ohio Communications Company received $295,235 for costs serving Adams County.
- JB Nets received $100,236 for costs serving Gallia County.

The program has spent about half of its $50 million appropriation. Reimbursement for projects will continue until funding is exhausted or until June 2029.

Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure
The Administration also announced the awarding of $51.8 million to communities in 33 counties to make safety improvements for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The majority of the funding went to municipalities, but some went to county entities. These include the following:

- Cuyahoga County Department of Public Works - $2.0 million
- Lucas County - $984,000
- Logan County - $2.9 million
- Fayette County - $880,000
- Tuscarawas County - $640,000

A full list of funded projects can be found here.

Homelessness Prevention
The Administration, through the Department of Development, recently granted $4 million in funding to four nonprofit agencies for homelessness prevention projects.

- Hocking Athens Perry Community Action Partnership - $2 million to create 10 additional units of housing in the City of Athens. Funding can also support site improvements.
- Mercy Mission House - $552,852 for projects in the City of Sidney to purchase a two-bedroom/one-bath house, a large farm house, and other outbuildings to create apartments with shared facilities for those facing homelessness.
- Axesspointe Community Health Center - $600,000 to create 11 individual housing units in Canton. The units are intended to serve the veteran population in the Stark County area.
- Family Promise of Summit County - $847,148 to acquire a 10,153 square foot facility to convert into a non-congregate shelter.

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.

Four State Plan on Aging Community Listening Sessions remain

Throughout June 2025, the Ohio Department of Aging will be hosting community listening sessions to learn from the experiences of older adults and caregivers across Ohio. The remaining sessions will be facilitated by the Health Policy Institute of Ohio and will be hosted in four Ohio communities:

- Youngstown (Mahoning County) — *June 16*
- Euclid (Cuyahoga County) — *June 23*
- Marietta (Washington County) — *June 25*
- Maumee (Lucas County) — *June 26*

Please see the attached recruitment flyers for the SPOA community listening sessions and share with your networks. Registration is limited at each event to create an environment conducive to conversation. Lunch or refreshments, as well as gift cards, will be provided to participants.

They are hoping to hear diverse perspectives from older Ohioans and their caregivers!

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 Soil and Water talks drones with county commissioners

LimaOhio.com, May 30, 2025

The Allen Soil and Water Conservation District has begun using drones to aid in surveying and drainage design, but concerns about potential liability issues with the drones when used outside Allen County prompted a meeting Thursday between district staff and the Allen County Board of Commissioners.

Since March, the district has been using two professional-grade drones manufactured by DJI Enterprise, the DJI Matrice 350 and the DJI Mavic 3 multispectral drone to survey ditches and wetlands as well as obtain topographical information to help create drainage plans.

"The Matrice 350 has two camera attachments," drainage engineer Josh Zwez said. "One is a LIDAR module, and the other is an inspection camera. (LIDAR) is using an infrared laser, and it scans the terrain. It's like a 3D scanner. We scan it, and then I bring it into the computer and I post-process it to create a recreation of the ground, basically."

While there is no question who would bear liability should an accident occur within Allen County, the commissioners wanted to ensure that Allen County would not be left holding the proverbial bag should another county wish to use the drone in its jurisdiction and an accident occur.

"These things, when they do crash, have been known to cause some serious injury, not just damage to property," commissioner Brian Winegardner said. "These are not just little toys anymore."

Northeast District

Commissioners discuss county "loss team" options

Star Beacon, May 30, 2025

The possible creation of a loss team was discussed Thursday morning during a work session of the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners at the request of Ashtabula County Coroner's Office Chief Investigator and Administrator Amber Stewart.

Stewart prepared a proposal for the commissioners, seeking the creation of a team to assist families who have lost loved ones. She said a loss team was operational in the county until 2022, through the Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, but has been inoperative since.

Stewart said she has been working with the Geauga County Loss Team in cases where families needed special assistance, and believes the program is needed in Ashtabula County.

A recent situation highlighted the need, Stewart said.

"I can't tell you how important was to have them on scene," she said of a visit by the Geauga volunteers.

Stewart said she has been studying the issue for two years, and sought to create it through the victims of crime office, but it didn't work out.

Central District

Morrow County Prosecutor to seek death penalty in Deputy's murder

Marion County Now, May 27, 2025

Prosecutor Andrew Wick held a significant news conference Friday at noon at the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, joined by Sheriff John Hinton and Fraternal Order of Police President and Marion Chief Jay McDonald. Wick commenced the event by stating that he had prepared a statement and would not take questions from reporters.

In his address, Wick expressed gratitude to the community for their prayers and ongoing support, urging them to continue praying for the family of fallen Deputy Daniel Sherrer, as well as for the community at large. Sherrer was killed when he responded to a domestic violence call in Marengo.

Wick emphasized the commitment of his office to ensure that crimes against police officers in Morrow County would face the most severe penalties possible. He revealed plans to set high bonds in these cases, preventing those accused of crimes against law enforcement from being released from jail. Furthermore, he stressed that the law enforcement community will strive for maximum prison sentences in these instances, calling on fellow prosecutors across the state to join in this effort.

"These are our front lines. We must have their backs," Wick stated.

Southwest District

Ohio Senate Finance Chair lays ground rules for stadium funding

WCPO, June 5, 2025

The state senator who introduced a new funding source for sports stadiums said a half-dozen teams have already expressed interest in a $1.1 billion grant pool that will be available after July if it ultimately becomes part of Ohio's next two-year budget.
[.......................]
Hamilton County Commission President Denise Driehaus was optimistic that the final state budget would include funding for Paycor Stadium renovations, after meeting with statehouse leaders.

"We were not left out, it is simply a different mechanism. The funding mechanism being used for Cuyahoga County does not work for Hamilton County, so we did not want to be part of a funding mechanism for them that simply does not work for us," Driehaus said. "This other piece, this $1.1 billion that remains, and that is what is in response to the request that we made."

She gave that update at a commission meeting on Thursday, where her colleagues refused to approve $1.5 million for six new club-level escalators at Paycor Stadium.

County Administrator Jeff Aluotto wanted to order steel for the project now, to ensure it arrives in time to start construction next year. But two commissioners were reluctant to spend new money until a new deal with the Bengals is finalized.

Southeast District

Jefferson County gets $8.5M for new water meters to curb losses, modernize systems

WTOV9, June 3, 2025

Through the Ohio Water Development Authority Fresh Water Loan Fund Program, Jefferson County is receiving a little more than $8.5 million at 3.94% for 20 years for the installation of more than 8,000 new water meters.

Jefferson County Water and Sewer Department Director Mike Eroshevich said this is a need as the current meters were installed more than 15 years ago.

According to Eroshevich, around 3,000 of the 8,000 meters are not transmitting data nor reading correctly, resulting in lost revenue for the county.

"Between leaky lines, water breaks, if the fire department uses water for fire; if the meters aren't reading accurately and we are under billing that leads to water loss," Eroshevich said. "That is no revenue, so about 40% of the water we purchase we don't get any money back for it."

The loan will not only cover the cost of the meters and transponders, but also the cost to hire a subcontractor. Once the work begins, Eroshevich said the subcontractor will notify each business or residence to schedule an appointment for the meter replacement. Once installed, Eroshevich said the new meters will change how the department operates thanks to an AMI network.

"What that means is instead of once a month, our staff driving around to read the meters once a month, this is going to relay that information back to our office daily," Eroshevich said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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JUNE 13
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (Virtual)
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

JUNE 19
Juneteenth - Holiday

JUNE 27
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

JULY 4
Independence Day - Holiday

AUGUST 8
2025 County Classic Golf Outing

AUGUST 24 - 26
2025 CCAO Summer Symposium

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