View this email in your browser

August 4, 2025

Congratulations to CCAO's newest member, Scioto County Commissioner Merit Smith! Commissioner Smith was sworn in last week to fill the commission seat that had been vacant since former commissioner Cathy Coleman passed away on July 4. You can read more about Commissioner Smith below.

Photo: New Scioto County Commissioner Merit Smith (center) with fellow commissioners Bryan Davis and Scottie Powell.

Photo courtesy of the Scioto County Daily News

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

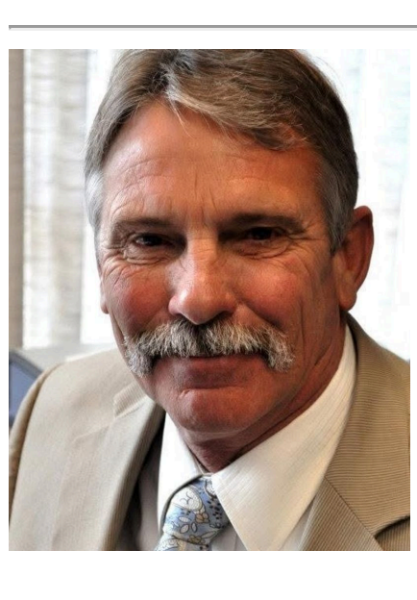
Former CCAO President, Franklin County Commissioner Dorothy Teater and former Marion County Commissioner Dan Russell pass away

Last week, former Franklin County Commissioner Dorothy Teater passed away at the age of 92. Dorothy was the first female Franklin County Commissioner, serving from 1986 to 2001. She was selected CCAO President in 1994, becoming the first Franklin County Commissioner to serve as CCAO President since 1946.

Dorothy and her husband moved to Columbus to pursue graduate degrees at OSU, after which she began her career in public service in Ohio. She worked as a Franklin County Extension Agent and a City of Columbus Consumer Affairs specialist before running for Columbus City Council.

After six years on the city council, she successfully ran for Franklin County Commissioner and served for sixteen years in that position.

You can read Dorothy's full obituary here.



Earlier this year, former Marion County Commissioner Dan Russell passed away at the age of 72.

Dan served as the president of Marion's Laborers' Union Local 574 before serving for two terms as a Marion County Commissioner. He also served as a trustee on the Marion County Historical Society Board and was active with the Can Do! Board, another local history and community development organization.

Dan's family will be having a celebration of life this Saturday, August 9, at 1:00 p.m. at the Steve Young Memorial Lodge in Caledonia.

You can read Dan's full obituary here.

Merit Smith named newest Scioto County Commissioner

Last week, the Scioto County Republican Central Committee selected Merit Smith to fill the county commission seat that has been vacant since Commissioner Cathy Coleman passed away on July 4.

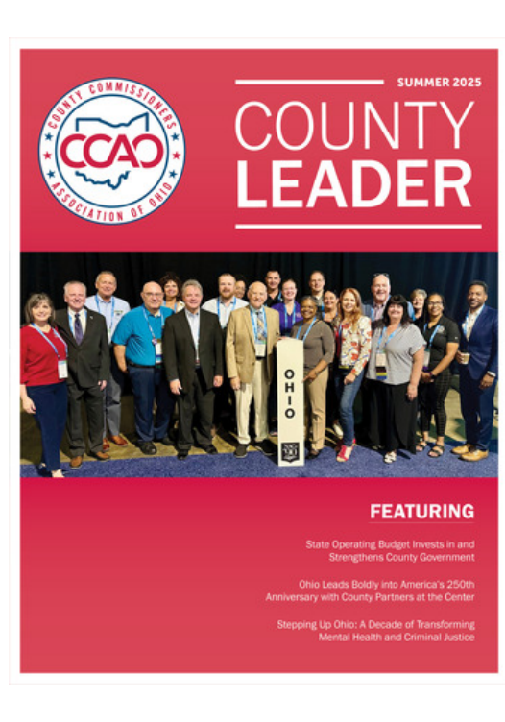
Commissioner Smith has served in various public service roles over his career, including a brief stint with the Scioto County Juvenile Court before moving to longer tenures as a chief probation officer (12 years) and a position with the South Central Ohio ESC (18 years).

Commission Smith also pastors two churches and serves as a volunteer firefighter and EMT.

Commissioner Smith will serve the duration of the unexpired term. The seat will be up for reelection on the November 2028 ballot (with primaries occurring in May 2028).

Welcome to CCAO, Commissioner!

County Leader's Summer 2025 edition is out now!


COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
CCAO
SUMMER 2025
COUNTY LEADER
OHIO
FEATURING
State Operating Budget Invests in and Strengthens County Government
Ohio Leads Boldly into America's 250th Anniversary with County Partners at the Center
Stepping Up Ohio: A Decade of Transforming Mental Health and Criminal Justice

CCAO has published the Summer 2025 edition of our magazine, *County Leader*!

Inside, you'll explore a range of stories packed with valuable information for counties, including:

- An overview of investments made in county government through the state operating budget
- A look at property tax reform efforts and the tools that commissioners currently possess
- The central role counties are playing to prepare for the United States' 250th birthday
- Celebrating a decade of Stepping Up Ohio
- And more!

Don't hesitate to contact Outreach & Member Engagement Manager Rachel Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org for feedback and ideas for future stories.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

JobsOhio
Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

Auditor of State provides payment re-direct scheme prevention training, checklist

The Auditor of State is offering training on payment "re-direct" spear phishing schemes through a recorded webinar and a checklist on recommended internal controls.

"Re-direct" schemes are those where a bad actor impersonates a vendor or employee and deceives a fiscal agent into re-directing legitimately-appropriated funds into fraudulent accounts.

The checklist includes important steps that employees should take to ensure any change in payment destination is legitimate. A vital step that can cut off spear phishing schemes before they start involves verifying basic information.

Ensure the email address the request comes from matches the vendor or employee's actual email address. This can be particularly difficult for certain names. For example, "nciolli@ccao.org" versus "nciolIi@ccao.org". The two look identical, but the second subs out one of the lower-case "L"s in "ciolli" with a capitalized "i". If anything in an email gives you pause, it is best to contact the individual through alternative means (such as a phone call).

In addition to the checklist, the Auditor of State is also offering a pre-recorded webinar to provide more details on the steps of the checklist. Completing the webinar will count towards the training portion for CORSA's Loss Control Incentive Program Bonus.

If you have questions about the training, please contact CORSA Risk Control Consultant James Hale.

Attorney General finds that county agricultural societies may not restrict lawful firearm possession

Attorney General Dave Yost issued OAG 2025-012 last week, concerning a recent request from the Champaign County Prosecutor that sought clarity on whether a county agricultural society is considered a political subdivision for R.C. 9.68.

This section generally provides the statutory mechanism for what are traditionally called Second Amendment rights, i.e., the right to keep and bear arms. R.C. 9.68(B) allows a person adversely affected by any manner of resolution enacted or enforced by a political subdivision that conflicts with the section to bring a civil action against the political subdivision.

Attorney General Yost determined that county agricultural societies are political subdivisions for the purposes of R.C. 9.68 since the societies derive their existence, powers, responsibilities, and limits from the Revised Code. With the determination that county agricultural societies are political subdivisions, they may not prohibit the lawful possession of firearms on their premises.

The full opinion provides more details on how the Attorney General reached this finding.

The request stemmed from the fact that various sections of the Revised Code and different judicial decisions have classified county agricultural societies as private entities while others have classified them as political subdivisions.

Since political subdivisions and private entities have different civil liabilities when restricting firearm possession, the Champaign County Prosecutor and Champaign County Sheriff sought clarity on what the sheriff's office's duties are when providing security at the county fair.

SERB releases latest edition of Cost of Health Insurance report

Last week, the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) released its 2025 edition of the Annual Cost of Health Insurance in Ohio's Public Sector Report. The report is the result of surveying Ohio's public employers regarding health insurance, plan design, and the cost to governments.

One high-level finding in the report is that medical premiums continue to grow faster than wages. In 2025, average wages in Ohio's public sector grew by 3.4% while medical premiums grew by 6.3% (for single premiums) and 5.9% (for family premiums). Premium growth for individuals exceeded that of families for the first time since 2021.

The report contains many more valuable insights on more focused analyses, such as premium differences between different insurance plan types, coverage differences in prescription insurance, and more. CCAO encourages counties familiarize themselves with the report.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

Back to Top

CyberOhio releases webinar recording, information on cybersecurity requirements

Last week, CyberOhio hosted a webinar to brief local governments on the new cybersecurity program requirements included in House Bill 96 that public entities must comply with. The effective date of the Revised Code provisions governing the cybersecurity program (R.C. 9.64) will take effect September 30.

The recording is available here, as are the slides. CyberOhio, which has responsibility for coordinating and guiding Ohio's wide-ranging cybersecurity efforts across all state executive branch agencies, also has more information on the program requirements on its website.

The Auditor of State is also preparing a bulletin to distribute to local governments regarding the new requirements. CCAO will share the bulletin when it becomes available.

BWC offers firefighter protection grants

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) reopened its safety grants program to help employers purchase equipment that significantly lowers the risk of workplace injuries. About $41 million is available through the program.

One of the currently available grants may be of interest to counties: The Firefighter Exposure to Environmental Elements Grant (FEEEG).

The FEEEG is intended to assist fire departments in acquiring protective equipment that minimizes exposure to dangerous substances that may be encountered during the line of duty. For the first time, the program offers funding to volunteer emergency medical services units.

Due to the high volume of applications the last time the grants were open, any previously submitted applicants must be entirely resubmitted.

You can learn more about the FEEEG and other BWC grant offerings here.

Chamber of Commerce to host Southeast Regional Impact conference on August 21

Later this month, on August 21, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a Southeast Regional Impact event at the Ohio University Inn & Conference Center in Athens.

The event, which will run from 9:00 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., is still open for registration. Tickets cost $59 and can be purchased here.

The event offers a unique opportunity for community leaders to come together for a deep dive into the most pressing issues facing Southeast Ohio. Attendees will hear directly from local elected officials, policy experts, and political strategists on the challenges and opportunities shaping the region.

Sessions will include a moderated discussion with state legislators (including Representative Kevin Ritter and Representative Bob Peterson, both former county commissioners), a panel on investment and innovation in SE Ohio while preserving the region's character, and a moderated discussion with congressional legislators. The full agenda can be found here.

History Fund grant program open for applications through September 9

The Ohio History Connection History Fund is a competitive matching grant program dedicated to supporting history projects across Ohio. Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations and public entities such as counties, libraries, and educational institutions.

Grants fall in one of three categories:

Brick and Mortar

- Includes rehabilitation, restoration, protection, or acquisition of historical and archaeological sites.
- Grants range from $2,000 to $20,000 and require a 60/40 match (the receiving entity must provide at least 40% of the total project cost).

Organization Development

- Includes building capacity to help historical societies and similar organizations help themselves through activities such as improving governance structures, volunteer development, and strategic plans, among others.
- Grants range from $1,000 to $4,000 with an 80/20 match (the receiving entity must provide at least 20% of the total project cost).

Programs & Collections

- Includes projects that further the study of historical collections and archives through activities such as digitization, funding field work, and putting on public programs, among others.
- Grants range from $2,000 to $20,000 and require a 60/40 match (the receiving entity must provide at least 40% of the total project cost).

Applications for 2025 are due by September 9.

The Ohio History Connection's website offers numerous resources to assist in crafting applications, including checklists, guidelines, and webinars.

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

Dog lover donates $200,000 to county pound after his death

Toledo Blade, July 23, 2025

Denny Van Camp died June 10, leaving behind a sizeable donation to Lucas County Canine Care & Control — the shelter from which he rescued his favorite dog, Roxy.

Lucas County's commissioners accepted the $200,000 gift with gratitude during their meeting Tuesday, thanking Mr. Van Camp for the generous donation. Dave Blyth, director of LC4, said the gift was a testament to his love for Roxy and the experience he had at LC4.

"In my mind, [the donation] is a reflection of how he was treated at the shelter, the respect he was accorded, and the choice of dogs," he said. "The dog he selected, he had it for close to 10 years. He didn't tell his other dogs this, but the dog that he adopted from our kennel was his favorite."

Mr. Van Camp rescued Roxy, a German shepherd, from LC4 in 2016. She died in 2024.

"He had really one experience with us, and for him then to give us a great sum of money like that, unexpected — it makes you feel good about government sometimes, when at least one person believes in your vision and puts some weight behind it," said Pete Gerken, Lucas County commissioner.

"This is an amazing donation that has been left to LC4," Ms. Sobecki said during the meeting. "I'm really looking forward to how we can best use this ... and I look forward to further conversations down the road."

The commissioners moved to accept the donation at their meeting, and said they will discuss how to use the money in the future. The funds dedicated to LC4 are restricted for certain uses by the Ohio Revised Code.

"We are going to take our time, and we are going to carefully review all aspects of our operation to determine the best use of that incredible donation," Mr. Blyth said

Northeast District

Ohio awards Cuyahoga County $30M for first Community Correctional Facility — a potential game-changer for juvenile justice

Cleveland.com, August 2, 2025

Cuyahoga County has secured $30 million in state funding to build its first Community Correctional Facility, a major step toward keeping young offenders closer to home, where they can receive treatment near their families and, ideally, achieve better outcomes.

The Ohio Department of Youth Services announced the award Friday, saying Cuyahoga County beat out Hamilton and Franklin counties to create the 32-bed secure residential treatment center serving both male and female youth. ODYS Director Amy Ast praised the county's unified commitment and plans for a trauma-informed approach to heal and rehabilitate youth and help them transition back home.

"Their vision of community stood out through and through," Ast said in a news release Friday. "From involving stakeholders, community partners and judicial support, their focus on community is what put their proposal over the finish line."

The new facility, also known as a CCF, aims to address a critical gap in the juvenile justice system. Currently, when judges seek to order youth convicted of serious crimes to a CCF, they must send them to one of 11 existing facilities across Ohio — all located more than an hour from Cuyahoga County.

For months, Juvenile Court officials have argued that the distance made meaningful family involvement — a key factor in successful reentry — nearly impossible. By building a local facility that doesn't exclude youth based on offense history or past behavior, the court believes it can reduce crime and limit the need for transferring young people to the adult system, a controversial process known as bindover.

"Removing youth far from their homes often breaks existing bonds between the youth, the family and community – even the positive connections," Court Administrator Thomas O'Malley told cleveland.com following the announcement. "Having a local facility will not only allow us to keep those positive bonds and connections intact, but will let us do work on strengthening them, too."

Central District

County-wide 911 dispatch center proposed, with voters to decide levy in November

Bellefontaine Examiner, August 1, 2025

The Logan County Sheriff's Office and the Bellefontaine Police Department are joining forces with a new plan to create a unified, countywide 911 dispatch center to improve emergency response times and coordination throughout Logan County.

This proposal, which will go before voters in November 2025, includes a 2.0-mill property tax levy to fund the new combined dispatch center.

If approved, the levy would cost Logan County property owners approximately $70 per year for every $100,000 of appraised property value.

In a a press release issued this week by the LCSO and BPD, officials said the goal is faster, more coordinated emergency response — when seconds matter most.

Currently, Bellefontaine operates a separate dispatch center, while the sheriff's office provides dispatching for all other emergency services in Logan County.

Under the proposal, those two systems would be consolidated into a single, modern 911 center located at the Logan County Sheriff's Office.

All emergency calls for police, fire, and EMS would be handled through one coordinated system.

Southwest District

Clark County sheriff talks current jail conditions related to overcapacity, disrepair

Springfield News-Sun, July 29, 2025

Clark County officials have worked for years to try and build a new jail since the current one does not have enough room and continues to be non-compliant with some standards set under Ohio laws, and they are now considering putting a 0.5% increase to the county's sales tax on the November ballot to help pay for a new one.

Sheriff Chris Clark said during a public hearing last week they are governed under Ohio Administrative Code 5120, which says they have 176 standards they have to follow with 53 considered essential and 123 considered important.

Every year, the jail is evaluated by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) on their operations, policies and procedures.

In 2024, they were complying with 162 standards, 50 essential and 112 important. They were found to be non-compliant with 14 standards, including three essential and 11 important.

"Out of those 14 (non-compliant), 10 had to deal with the infrastructure of the jail. The other four were policy and procedures, and those either have been rectified or they're in the process of being there," Clark said.

The non-complaint standards have to do with not having enough square footage, Clark said. For example, there's supposed to be one toilet and one sink per 12 inmates and 35 square feet per inmate living space, but they are out of compliance on those.

"Even if we were to modify our current jail at an exorbitant cost, we would probably lose bed space in order to become compliant with Ohio law and where we were supposed to be," he said.

Southeast District

Commissioners hear update on search and rescue team training

The Ironton Tribune, August 2, 2025

At Tuesday's Lawrence County Commissioners' meeting, members of the Lawrence County Firefighter Association stopped by to explain some of the trainings that firefighters around the county have done recently.

Larry Dickess, one of the vice presidents of Lawrence County Firefighter Association, gave an update of the recent activities of the county's search and rescue team, which included helping to locate missing children and a lost adult hiker, all of whom were found safely. He said the team has been doing monthly trainings to improve their skills including low angle rope rescue and K-9 training at the 650 trails, as well as training simpler search skills, such as communication, fire starting, grid search and shelter building.

"All in all, this team continues to get better, constantly learning and training so that they are ready and able to help anyone that may call on them," Dickess said.

Some of the upcoming trainings include school bus training today at South Point, basic wildfire training at JROC and dealing with chlorine emergencies.

He said some of the trainings are put on by a fire department and they have invited other firefighters to attend and some are put on by the association.

"We've kept a pretty full schedule all year," Dickess said. "And things are going in the right direction."

He said that they have even had trainings that were attended by crews from Gallia and Scioto County.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

AUGUST 15
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 24 - 26
2025 CCAO Summer Symposium
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (August 26)

AUGUST 29
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

SEPTEMBER 1
Labor Day - Legal Holiday

SEPTEMBER 12
CORSA Annual Meeting

SEPTEMBER 19
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

Copyright © 2025 CCAO, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.