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November 3, 2025

One month until the Winter Conference!

Early bird registration pricing end on Friday, register today!

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Former Wood County Commissioner Jim Carter passes away

Late in October, former Wood County Commissioner Jim Carter passed away at the age of 86.

Jim was appointed to an unexpired term in 1995 and went on to serve as Wood County Commissioner until his retirement in 2015. Before serving as commissioner, he also served as the mayor of Grand Rapids, Ohio, for 16 years and also spent time on the village council and on the Wood County Board of Education.

Jim served in the U.S. Army as a specialist in air defense. His public service continued after he returned to ohio, serving as a firefighter and an EMT.

You can read Jim's full obituary here.

County treatment foster home collaborative returns $4 to taxpayers, community for every $1 invested

The following is reposted from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO)

In a report released today by PCSAO, research by Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service shows that an innovative treatment foster home collaborative in Northwest Ohio saved taxpayers roughly $1.9 million in placement costs, staff time, healthcare spending and special education costs.

In treatment foster care, specially licensed and trained foster parents provide a higher therapeutic level of care to young people with complex trauma and challenging behaviors so that they can live in family settings rather than institutional placements.

The Northwest Treatment Foster Care Collaborative, led by Sandusky County Job & Family Services (JFS), also includes Seneca, Wyandot, Ottawa, Hancock and Wood counties. "For years we sent children to live in group homes and residential facilities in places on the other side of the state because we did not have enough treatment-level foster care available in our region," said Melanie Allen, director of Sandusky County JFS and a member of PCSAO's board of trustees. "By licensing our own treatment foster homes, we were able to keep kids closer to home, avoid separating siblings, reduce caseworker travel and reunify children with their parents more quickly. Yes, we saved money, but even more importantly, we avoided additional trauma for these kids and the long-term negative consequences of that trauma."

In return for a grant of $524,000 supported by Gov. Mike DeWine and the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, the pilot generated roughly $2.2 million in estimated social value. Benefits include avoiding new group home placements, increasing placement stability, stepping children down from institutional to family settings, reunifying more quicky and improving outcomes for foster parents. "This approach is a win for taxpayers and a win for county children services agencies," said PCSAO Executive Director Angela Sausser. "Caseworkers reported increased job satisfaction because they have more options to place children close to home in family settings, and foster parents reported increased confidence, sense of purpose and sense of control."

The pilot has expanded to 10 additional collaboratives in 36 other counties.

Review the study results

FINAL WEEK for Early Bird Pricing for 2025 CCAO/CEAO Winter Conference!

Early Bird Registration Fee Ends November 7, 2025!

Click Here to Register!

Early Bird Registration Fees:

Full Conference $525

One Day Only $380

Spouse or Guest Flat Fee for Full Conference or One Day Only $200

Affiliate Groups Have Option to Choose Meetings Only + Coffee Breaks $125

Rates after November 7, 2025

Full Conference $625

One Day Only $480

Spouse or Guest Flat Fee for Full Conference or One Day Only $300

Affiliate Groups Have Option to Choose Meetings Only + Coffee Breaks $175

Sessions at this year's conference will include best practices for energy and economic development, information on data centers, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and changes to the children services landscape.

There will also be five sessions focusing on different aspects of property taxation and the potential ramifications of if property taxation is eliminated.

The full tentative agenda can be viewed here.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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State moves to provide aid as federal government shutdown affects SNAP

Since October 1, the federal government has been shut down. While the federal shutdown affects many programs and services, a key focus has been on the impact it will have on the country's main food assistance program, SNAP. Since the federal government funds SNAP benefits, the distribution of those benefits cannot occur while the government is shut down.

On Thursday, Governor Mike DeWine signed Executive Order 2025-06D to declare an emergency and authorize the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to distribute $7 million in Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) funds to regional food banks to help the banks procure food to distribute to clients.

The Executive Order also directs the Department to distribute temporary relief payments under TANF to recipients of the Ohio Works First benefit program. Recipients of the Ohio Works First program (families at or below 50% of the federal poverty line with children) will receive their usual monthly benefit and an additional weekly benefit equal to 25% of their typical monthly payment. The supplemental payments are expected to begin being distributed by November 7.

The Executive Order will remain in effect for 120 days. While the appropriations mentioned above are only for November, additional appropriations may be required if the federal shutdown extends into December.

NACo Great Lakes Regional Forum offers opportunities to learn from other Great Lakes counties

The Great Lakes Regional Forum is a new NACo body, chaired by Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne, which focuses on issues facing the states bordering the Great Lakes. NACo members interested in serving on the Forum can do so through the association's Committee Application portal.

Members with questions about the Forum should reach out to the NACo staff liaison, Ben Gilsdorf at bgilsdorf@naco.org.

Last week, the Forum held a meeting to hear from Helena Volzer of the Alliance for the Great Lakes about a report on water constraints in the Great Lakes region. The report discusses how the growing demand for data centers could strain the region's water resources.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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CyberOhio hosting ransomware webinar this week

Ransomware remains one of the most serious threats facing local governments today. Join CyberOhio for a practical session on how to take immediate steps to reduce your risk and how to build a stronger security foundation for the future.

In this session, you'll learn:

- Quick-win steps to immediately strengthen defenses
- Practical strategies tailored for local governments

Don't miss this opportunity to protect your organization from one of today's most pressing cyber threats.

You can register for the webinar here.

2025 Cyber Summit to be held November 19

Join cybersecurity leaders, government officials, education and nonprofit professionals at Ohio's premier cybersecurity gathering. Hosted by the Ohio Innovation and Technology Association in partnership with the State of Ohio, the CyberOhio Summit is your chance to dive into the state's cyber landscape — from new standards and legislative updates to best practices and collective defense. The event will take place on November 19 at the Fawcett Center in Columbus.

Registration is available here.

6th ANNUAL
Ohio Grants Summit
Ohio Office of Budget and Management
SAVE THE DATE!
Dec. 9 - 11, 2025 | 9 a.m. - Noon
Grants.Ohio.gov

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

Lucas County leaders look for solutions to shutdown-caused loss of SNAP

WTOL, October 21, 2025

Federal food assistance may not be disbursed for the month of November, which concerns Lucas County officials.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said if the government shutdown continues, there's not enough money to keep the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program going.

Almost 72,000 people in the Lucas County, roughly 17% of the total population, received SNAP benefits in September, and about 44% of them are kids. So, $13.1 million of SNAP benefits would not come to the county.

"We have 11 days to the 11th month before people are in the 11th hour where they're not going to have what they need," state Rep. Erika White (D-Springfield Township) said.

Lucas County Commissioner Pete Gerken said the potential loss of SNAP benefits will have far-reaching impacts.

"As well as the people not being fed, it's the people that feed them with that money and that EBT card," Gerken said. "We're harming families. We're harming small businesses. We're harming the economic development of this community."

"This is a crisis," he added. "This is a storm that was inflicted on us."

Community leaders are asking the state to step in and use its budget stabilization fund, comparable to a rainy day fund, to help fill the gap.

"Release the money," said county commissioner Lisa Sobecki. "This is Lucas County taxpayer dollars that went to Columbus that they held on to."

There is a potential solution making its way through the Statehouse: House Bill 502. If passed, it would set aside funds for programs like SNAP and WIC during lapses in federal funding. But, state representatives said it takes time to get it passed. They're looking for other solutions before it's too late.

State Rep. Josh Williams (R-Sylvania Twp.) said he has similar concerns if benefits don't come through, but he said people should call on the legislators in Washington.

Northeast District

Tensions build over looming 'mega site' as residents, officials meet with county commissioner

Chronicle Telegram, October 18, 2025

More than 100 people packed inside the South Amherst Village Hall on Monday night to express their concerns about a proposed "mega site" of more than 1,000 acres around the Lorain County Regional Airport.

The residents hailed from all throughout Lorain County. For many, their issues lie in the disruptions to a rural lifestyle that they've had for generations.

Others have voiced concerns of the potential future development, pointing to environmental impacts to water, air quality and sound.

For Kim Polen, who lives along Russia Road just south of the regional airport, the potential impact is real — and seemingly out of nowhere.

"Now we're being told this has been in planning for years," Polen said. "So absolutely, left in the dark from county commissioners and even some of the former trustees that we had."

At the South Amherst Council meeting Monday evening, Lorain County Commissioner David J. Moore was addressed with question after question by residents, ranging from a lack of transparency and communication to what power, if any, county residents might have to control what may happen.

Andrea Barlow, a New Russia Township resident who spoke Monday night, pleaded with local officials.

"I don't know what happened to our trustees and why they got that confused, but we moved here because we value what matters: Family, our food sources, our environment," Barlow said. "Please, listen to the citizens. Stop being selfish. It's not about the dollar. It's about longevity. It's about legacy. That's what this is about."

In a phone interview last week, Moore said the development around the airport, one way or another, is inevitable.

"I'm looking at companies that are going to be bringing good-paying jobs," he said. "And I've gotten beaten up for this, I don't want one company with 5,000 jobs. I'd like to have 10 companies with 500 jobs. And that way we're not controlled by one industry. We've all lived through that with the steel industry and the automotive industry."

For the development, Moore said the county is looking at "other industries that are tied to aviation, and there's a lot."

Moore referenced potential "defense contracts, and stuff like that," adding that "that's kind of what we're looking for. Hoping to create quite a few jobs."

Central District

Mental health services at risk if levy fails in November

Knox Pages, October 22, 2025

Knox County voters will see a levy for Mental Health & Recovery for Licking and Knox Counties on the Nov. 4 ballot.

The MHR Board is asking voters to renew a 10-year, 1-mill property tax levy. The levy generates $1.264 million a year in Knox County.

Levy income accounts for 40% of the agency's funding. The levy costs property owners $35 for each $100,000 in appraised property value.

Kay Spergel, executive director of the MHR Board, said losing approximately $1.264 million a year means all services could be severely reduced.

"That level of funding loss could mean hundreds of residents losing access to care each year," she said.

"It would greatly impact all outpatient care for mental health, addiction and prevention services. This means adults in treatment for counseling or psychiatric services may face longer wait times or no local care at all."

The levy funds an array of services, including 24/7 crisis response, youth prevention programs, addiction recovery, and mental health urgent care.

"Several community providers who are currently fully funded through the levy could face major service cuts or closure of key programs. Programs that residents rely on every day could disappear," Spergel said.

"Local law enforcement, schools, and hospitals would shoulder more of the burden as more residents in crisis go without timely, appropriate behavioral health care."

Southwest District

Commissioners concerned sheriff already hired 19.5 unbudgeted staffers

Journal-News, October 23, 2025

All three Butler County commissioners were "flabbergasted" when they learned Sheriff Richard Jones has already hired 19 staffers he requested in his 2026 budget without consulting them.

Jones' $61 million budget submission included adding 18 more employees next year than he budgeted this year— for a total complement of 425 staffers. During his budget hearing last week he revealed they've already hired 19.5 new staffers, despite the commissioner-imposed hiring freeze.

"We started the hiring phase before you put that in place," he told the commissioners during his annual budget hearing. "So a little lack of communication on our part, so we'll take the blame for that."

Commissioner Cindy Carpenter told the Journal-News, "I think everybody was a little flabbergasted by it."

She said normally elected leaders would inform the commissioners if they wanted to make such a move but "sadly he did not choose to do that and apparently they've been on the payroll for months."

The commissioners issued a hiring freeze for the remainder of this year and next in May. Sheriff's personnel counts are always very fluid but Jill Cole, finance director for the county auditor's office, said 431 employees were paid on Jan. 3 — 373 were full-timers — and 473 employees received paychecks last week, 419 are full-time.

Vickie Barger, the sheriff's finance director, told the Journal-News 15 of the new hires are jail corrections officers and the rest are contracted positions, paid for by other jurisdictions and schools.

Commissioner T.C. Rogers told the Journal-News the hiring freeze was instituted due to economic concerns, but the influx of prisoner revenue should cover the new hires.

"I'm not upset that he already made the hires, I'm disappointed that he didn't have the confidence in us to ask us first," he said. "I thought we had a stronger relationship than that."

Southeast District

Commissioners approve $1.3 million in state-funded projects and agreements

YourOhioNews, October 24, 2025

Three agreements were approved by the Harrison County commissioners at their Oct. 8 meeting.

The first, Agreement 43-25, was between the board and the Ohio Department of Transportation under the title LPA Federal Local-Let Project Agreement. It noted that the National Transportation Act provides federal funding "for use by local public agencies," with ODOT designated by the Federal Highway Administration to administer those funds.

"The purpose of this agreement is to set forth requirements associated with the federal funds available for the project and to establish the responsibilities for the local administration of the project," the agreement stated.

"This is a grant that will fund up to $313,168.75 for various guardrail projects throughout the county," Commissioner Dustin Corder said, adding that the projects would be fully funded.

A letter dated Sept. 15, 2020, from the County Engineers Association of Ohio to former Harrison County Engineer Douglas Bachman approved a funding request consisting of $288,500 for a construction contract estimate, a 4% construction engineering estimate of $11,500 and 100 percent HSIP funding totaling $300,000.

The second agreement, 44-25, was also between the commissioners and ODOT and covered a county road pavement rehabilitation project on Harrison 24. Corder said the project was awarded $487,860.

The final agreement, 45-25, was between the board and the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. Corder said the total amount of funding obligated under the 33-page agreement is up to $500,000 for the purpose of accepting grants.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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NOVEMBER 4
General Election

NOVEMBER 7
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 14
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 21
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 27
Thanksgiving - Holiday

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