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February 9, 2026

The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) cut the ribbon at its new Multispecies Animal Learning Complex in Columbus. The facility will give students hands-on experience with swine, equine, poultry, and ruminants, while the public will get to view how livestock production and handling facilities work.

Counties were represented at the ribbon cutting by Wayne County Commissioner Jon Hofstetter, who also serves as the chair of CCAO's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

(Photo, L - R: Senator Bill DeMora, Representative Alison Russo, Secretary of State Regional Liaison Brian Metzbower, Senator Kyle Koehler, CFAES Dean Cathann Kress, Representative Roy Klopfenstein, and Commissioner Hofstetter)

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Ohio Counties Scholarship now accepting applications

The 2026 Ohio Counties Scholarship application is now available through the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation!

This scholarship supports the next generation of public servants. Since 2023, the Foundation has awarded $30,000 in scholarships to 15 young leaders from 14 Ohio counties. This year, five scholarships will be awarded, with an application deadline of May 1.

Applicants should plan on a career in public service in Ohio.

This includes, but not limited to: elected official, public administrators, civil servants/government employee, social workers, military, education, healthcare, law enforcement and justice, emergency services, non-profit and community service, conservation/wildlife, city/state planners, public works employees, and workforce development.

We would greatly appreciate any help you can provide in sharing this opportunity within your county, including:

- Posting on social media
- Sharing through press releases or newsletters
- Distributing to local schools, guidance counselors, or local partners

Thank you for helping us spread the word and reach Ohio’s future leaders! Please reach out to Managing Director of Enterprise and Retirement Services Steve Caraway at scaraway@ccao.org if you have any questions.

CEBCO Managing Director position open and accepting applicants

The County Employee Benefits Consortium of Ohio (CEBCO) is soliciting applications for the Managing Director, Health and Wellness position.

The Managing Director will lead and manage CEBCO in delivering health care, wellness, and employee benefits to CEBCO's member counties. The position is also a part of the CCAO Management Team.

The ideal candidate will have industry knowledge of the health insurance industry, knowledge of ACA, HIPPA, ERISA, and other health-related regulatory compliance reporting, and have more than five years experience in the health insurance industry.

More information about the position can be found here.

County Loss Control Coordinators Association accepting new members

Renewals for 2026 are now open!

The County Loss Control Coordinators Association (CLCCA) is a CCAO affiliate organization supporting county Risk Management and HR professionals throughout Ohio with access to education, resources, and networking.

Benefits of CLCCA Membership include:

- Quarterly risk management training opportunities that frequently qualify for Ohio BWC two-hour safety training requirements
- Access to CCAO information and legislative updates
- Potential CORSA premium discounts through the Loss Control Incentive, often offsetting membership dues
- Networking with Risk Management and HR peers
- Free membership in the Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) as well as an opportunity for a PRIMA scholarship
  - *Only available to Professional Members*

CLCCA encourages eligible county employees with loss control or risk management responsibilities to join.

Types of Memberships

- **Professional Memberships** are available for those who are designated by their Board of County Commissioners as being responsible for loss control/risk management.
- **Associate Memberships** are available at a lower cost for all other county employees who may wish to become members
  - *Please note a Professional Membership is required to add Associate Memberships in your county.*

Membership forms and details are available at CLCCA's website and should be returned to the CLCCA Secretary/Treasurer by ***March 1***.

If you have questions, please contact a member of our Board of Directors.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

RUMPKE

STATE AND FEDERAL

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NACo provides information, advocacy requests on two federal bills

The National Association of Counties (NACo) has issued two updates on pieces of federal legislation.

First, the U.S. House is expected to consider H.R. 6644, the Housing for the 21st Century Act. The bill is intended to advance reforms to improve the housing supply, streamline housing-related federal programs, and support the ability of local governments to meet housing needs.

NACo is requesting counties engage with their U.S. Representative(s) this week and has provided a template letter to assist with talking points.

Second, the House is expected to consider H.R. 22, the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act. The bill would require establish requirements for state and local election officials to verify citizenship of registered voters.

Substantially similar bills have been introduced in the Ohio General Assembly this term (Senate Bill 153 and House Bill 233) and some similar provisions to the federal SAVE Act were enacted through Senate Bill 293.

Other NACo updates

NACo is accepting applications for two programs.

First is the Public Health Leadership Academy, which will strength understanding of public health concepts and systems, foster collaboration between counties and public health officials, build awareness and identify cross-sector collaboration, and support policy and programming tailored to local needs.

Each application must designate a "team" submitted by the county. Teams must include one county elected official or designee (designees should be a senior staff member focused on health policy) and one local health department representative with decision-making authority.

All team members must be able to attend four virtual sessions and an in-person meeting in Washington D.C. from June 3-5 (expenses paid by NACo), and participate in between-session activities.

Applications are due by March 13. The academy will only accept teams from 12 counties nationwide, so we encourage you to apply and represent Ohio.

Second, NACo is accepting applications for the 2026 Achievement Award Program, which recognizes outstanding county government programs and services.

If you have an innovative county program or project that you want to highlight on the national stage, we encourage you to apply! More information on the program can be found on its NACo webpage.

Applications must be submitted by March 31. The application fee for those submitted before March 3 is $75, after which it will be $100. New this year is that counties with fewer than 50,000 residents can apply for free.

Ohio counties have won 143 awards since 2017 (CCAO also received an award in 2021). Past awards have included a broadband expansion project in Warren County (2025), summer career exploration camps provided for free to students in Fairfield County (2023), a transitional, re-entry program in Shelby County (2020), and a pollinator sanctuary to provide beekeeping classes in Defiance County (2019).

A full list of Ohio awards can be found on this page by filtering by state.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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Chamber of Commerce to host Housing Summit in February

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a Housing Summit on February 26, which will convene housing experts, business leaders, policymakers, and community partners for in-depth conversations on the opportunities and challenges shaping Ohio’s housing landscape. Participants will explore the factors affecting housing supply, accessibility, and affordability—and how these issues directly influence Ohio’s ability to attract and retain a growing workforce.

Through collaborative discussions, case studies, and forward-looking insights, the series will highlight innovative approaches, policy considerations, and community-driven strategies aimed at strengthening Ohio’s housing market. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of the interconnected needs of employers, workers, and local communities as Ohio continues to grow and compete for talent.

The full agenda can be found here.

Registration costs $99 for Chamber of Commerce members and $149 for non-members.

COHHIO to host webinar on continuum of care funding and updates

On February 25, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) will be hosting a webinar about housing, homelessness & the continuum of care. The one-hour webinar will include discussion of federal continuum of care funding and the impact that funding has on local communities, how local leaders can get involved, and tips on federal advocacy.

Registration is free and can be completed here.

Two grant opportunities available through the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board

The Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board has two open scholarships that may be of interest to county staff.

First, in conjunction with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, is scholarship aid to support continuing education for graduate students and individuals who care for the historic record. The Board will award two scholarships of up to $1,000 each to assist individuals in attending, either virtually or in person, a professional development opportunity of their choosing. Funding is available to support attendance at trainings, meetings, or conferences.

Applicants must be individuals who are full-time (minimum of 9 credits) graduate students currently enrolled in an Ohio institution of higher education; individuals working or volunteering in an Ohio library, archive, special collection, or government repository; individuals who serve as a state, county, municipal or township officials or their designees and whose main responsibility is to maintain public records; and those who work or volunteer in other roles caring for or providing access to records within the State of Ohio.

The application for the scholarship is available here.

To be considered, the application must be received no later than **March 1**. Applications received after this date will not be considered. Applicants will be notified by phone or email of their status respectively.

Second, the organization is offering the Ohio Archives Grant Program, which is intended to fund projects to preserve and/or provide access to Ohio historical records.

Grants are available from $500 to $5,000 and must be used for one of three project types:

- Access, Arrangement and Description: identifying, organizing, and improving access to historical records.
- Website Development: Adding collections to online catalog, developing virtual archives, or creating an on-line database. Websites designed to support access to researchers (e.g., online catalogs, finding aids, and digitized collections, rather than curated web exhibits) will receive preference in funding.
- Projects focused on under-documented communities and topics, as well as underserved communities, are encouraged.

Applications for this grant must be submitted by March 31, but applicants can submit a draft application by February 24 to receive feedback and recommendations.

More information about this grant can be found here.

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

Next Generation 911 implemented in Allen County

LimaOhio.com, February 5, 2026

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced the next step toward Next Generation 911, with Allen County recently getting full implementation of the new system.

In July 2025, DeWine announced that 10 counties were part of the pilot project, which included Athens, Carroll, Champaign, Columbiana, Harrison, Monroe, Morgan, Union, Van Wert, and Washington.

In addition to the 10 counties in the pilot project, Allen County was part of implementing the NG911 technology and began the onboarding process. The full implementation took place Jan. 29, and Allen County EMA Director Jared Gesler spoke about the process.

“Next Gen 911 uses GPS and GIS and is a digital system with a focus on the improved cell phone technology that we all enjoy. The goal is the same, to connect anyone in need of emergency services with a communications officer who can get help started their way,” Gesler said.

He added that the difference is the accuracy and safeguards that it improves on. With new technology, we meet the new technology standards in cybersecurity and data transfer. Location data will be much more precise.

Before the upgrade, all cell phone 911 calls were routed to the Allen County Sheriff’s Office public safety answering point, which used an analog location system that relied on a table of address points.

The new upgrade has all 911 calls routed directly to the Lima Police Department, allowing them to dispatch emergency services more rapidly. While it was being implemented, the sheriff’s office tested the system extensively, and to make the NG911 live, they tested the old system and recorded how everything was working, then performed the same tests after we switched over to NG911.

Northeast District

Commissioners back $43M housing bond for 353-unit Lorain development

Cleveland.com, February 4, 2026

Lorain County Commissioners last week approved the issuance of a $43 million tax-exempt revenue bond to support the acquisition and renovation of 353 affordable housing units in the city of Lorain.

The bond will be issued on behalf of the Lorain County Metropolitan Housing Authority and will finance the purchase, renovation and equipping of three apartment properties that will collectively operate as an affordable housing development known as Western Horizon Development.

The properties are located at 2153 Lorain Drive, 2218 W. 24th St. and 2310 W. 20th St. The units will be maintained as rental housing for low- and moderate-income families, according to information presented to the board.

The action authorizes the housing authority to move forward with the financing but does not create a new tax obligation for county residents.

During discussion, commissioners emphasized that the project relies on federal low-income housing tax credits, rather than traditional taxpayer-funded financing.

One commissioner noted that the overall project cost may appear high at first glance, but said that is largely due to the structure of federal tax credits used to make affordable housing developments financially viable. Those credits are typically sold to private investors, providing upfront capital that bridges the gap between construction costs and what affordable rents can support.

Central District

Richland County commissioners unveil video showcasing county courthouse improvements

Richland Source, February 3, 2026

Josh Hicks took over as the Richland County maintenance superintendent in May 2022 — just in time to oversee the biggest remodeling project in the history of the 58-year-old county courthouse.

Suffice to say it was a challenging time during the last four years for Hicks, who worked with county administrator Andrew Keller and multiple contractors on projects that touched all five floors of the building at 50 Park Ave. East and totaled around $5.3 million.

Hicks and Keller were both in attendance on Tuesday morning as the county’s Board of Commissioners unveiled a new, 4:33 video showcasing the improvements.

“This has been a long project,” Keller said. “Folks (watching the video) will see the stark contrast between the before and the after for these building improvements.”

Commissioners have stressed no debt was incurred for the work, which used American Rescue Plan Act funds and also Richland County capital improvement money.

Southwest District

Fayette commissioners approve $20K for land use plan, update DD building timeline

Record Herald, February 3, 2026

The Fayette County commissioners met Monday to discuss upcoming renovations to the Fayette County Board of Developmental Disabilities building on Robinson Road.

Larry Gray, director of the Board of DD, said proposed plans and preliminary cost estimates are complete. The project is expected to begin in late February or mid-March. The renovations will focus on upgrading mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems for the 13,000-square-foot facility.

Planned improvements include adding restrooms and enlarging the space for the Early Intervention department. While the board has occupied the building for about 40 years, the roof and HVAC systems were previously upgraded. Gray noted that funds for the project have already been encumbered.

Brooke Bihlman, representing the office of Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague, addressed the board regarding the Buckeye Business Advantage program. The initiative offers small-business opportunity loans, including $100,000 loans at a 3% interest rate.

The program provides loans of up to $1 million over two years, with interest rate reductions of up to 3% below the prime rate. Ohio businesses with fewer than 150 employees are eligible to apply.

Southeast District

Hocking County Zoning Commission fields citizen questions at monthly meeting

Logan Daily, February 3, 2026

On Thursday, The Hocking County Zoning Commission held its first meeting since October. The commission is currently at work developing a set of five narrowly targeted land use ordinances that could be enacted by the county commissioners, as an alternative to county-wide zoning that would have to be approved by voters as a ballot measure.

The proposed ordinances, floated in September 2025, deal respectively with short-term rentals; excessive noise; permits for special events; commercial and industrial site standards; and impact fees for new development projects.

The first portion of Thursday’s commission meeting included going over the clarifications the members have since made to the ordinances, which as of Friday had not been uploaded to the county website. These include clarifications such as the addition of the term “campground” to the relevant ordinance, the difference between short term rentals and hotels, and who is required to have liability coverage. Many of these clarifications were created after the zoning commission received questions from citizens and short-term rental owners.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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FEBRUARY 13
CCAO Board of Directors' Meeting

FEBRUARY 16
Presidents' Day - Holiday

FEBRUARY 20
CORSA Board of Directors' Meeting

FEBRUARY 27
CEBCO Board of Directors' Meeting

MARCH 13
CORSA Board of Directors' Meeting

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