View this email in your browser

February 17, 2026

As part of its Black History Month celebrations, the Lucas County Commissioners honored community members Warren and Yolanda Woodberry, Bishop Randall Parker III, Dennis Hopson, and Alicia Smith at their meeting last week.

(Photo courtesy of the Lucas County Commissioners)

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

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.

OPD delivers update on reimbursement rate and upcoming initiatives to CCAO Board

Earlier today, State Public Defender Elizabeth Miller and her staff delivered an update to the CCAO board. First and foremost, she confirmed an 82% reimbursement rate for the remainder of the fiscal year. Reimbursement requests from counties spiked in October at approximately $20 million (likely due to the three paydays that occurred in the month) but otherwise have hovered between $18 million and $19 million each month.

Public Defender Miller also provided an update on the Northwest Regional Hub, one of CCAO's budget priorities last year. This separately funded pilot program utilizes OPD staff to provide indigent defense on behalf of Allen, Putnam, and Hardin Counties in the northwest part of the state. One of the goals of the hub is to identify efficiencies in this delivery model, with the hope that this model can be expanded to additional counties in the next budget.

She also provided an update on the performance audit that is currently being conducted by the Auditor of State to evaluate and recommend efficiencies and system delivery models across the state.

She discussed a new requirement for counties to submit a county indigent defense cost projection report by July 31. The report must include the county's projected expenditures on indigent defense operation and delivery for the upcoming state biennium. OPD staff is available to help counties fill out this report. If you need help getting in touch with their staff, please reach out to the CCAO Policy Team.

While there is no penalty for not submitting the information, counties are encouraged to submit this information to OPD. OPD will use this information to develop an estimated cost of the system statewide and allow them to make an informed budget request to fully fund the system for the next administration. Typically, if funding for a program is included in the Governor's version of the budget, it is more likely that the funding will end up in the final version of the budget.

A link with additional information about the cost projection report and submission instructions can be found here.

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.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

PALMER
ENERGY COMPANY

STATE AND FEDERAL

Back to Top

General Assembly releases community project application for capital budget

Last week, the General Assembly began sharing the application that local communities need to use to apply for community project funding for this year's capital budget. The application requires specific information, including a brief project description, the asset/facility owner, the total project cost, and other funding sources.

The deadline to submit applications is March 12.

The community project portion of the capital bill provides an opportunity for local governments, nonprofits, and other community organizations to receive state infrastructure funding. Some of the community projects the Constitution allows funding for are parks, trails, theaters, jails, museums, and sports facilities.

The Office of Budget and Management has a list of project types that either cannot be funded through community project funds, are funded through other sources, or have traditionally been deemed unfundable. If you submit a project that falls into one of these categories, it will likely be denied.

This capital budget cycle, the General Assembly is using a single, streamlined community project application to streamline the process for local governments. If you are interested in securing capital for a project, we recommend reaching out to your representative(s) and senator(s). After you have submitted the forms, you should schedule meetings with your representative(s) and senator(s) to discuss the project.

Site visits can be effective in conveying the need for a project. Securing supporting statements from other local governments and community organizations, or submitting a joint request, can help demonstrate broad local support for a project.

Given limited funds and a highly competitive process, you should verify that any projects you submit are eligible for bonding. If a project is not bondable, it cannot be funded through the capital budget. Additionally, while you can submit multiple requests, it is recommended that applicants focus on a single strong project and provide all requested information by the required deadline.

Legislators compile a list of potential projects in their districts and submit them to the chamber leadership. The leadership of each chamber, likely in coordination with the other chamber and the Governor's Office, then goes through the lists and provides appropriations until they hit the target amount for each county.

Projects that are higher on a member's list are more likely to get funded than projects lower on the list. Some members may add every proposed project in their district to their list, so it is important to work with your members to ensure the project ranks higher than others.

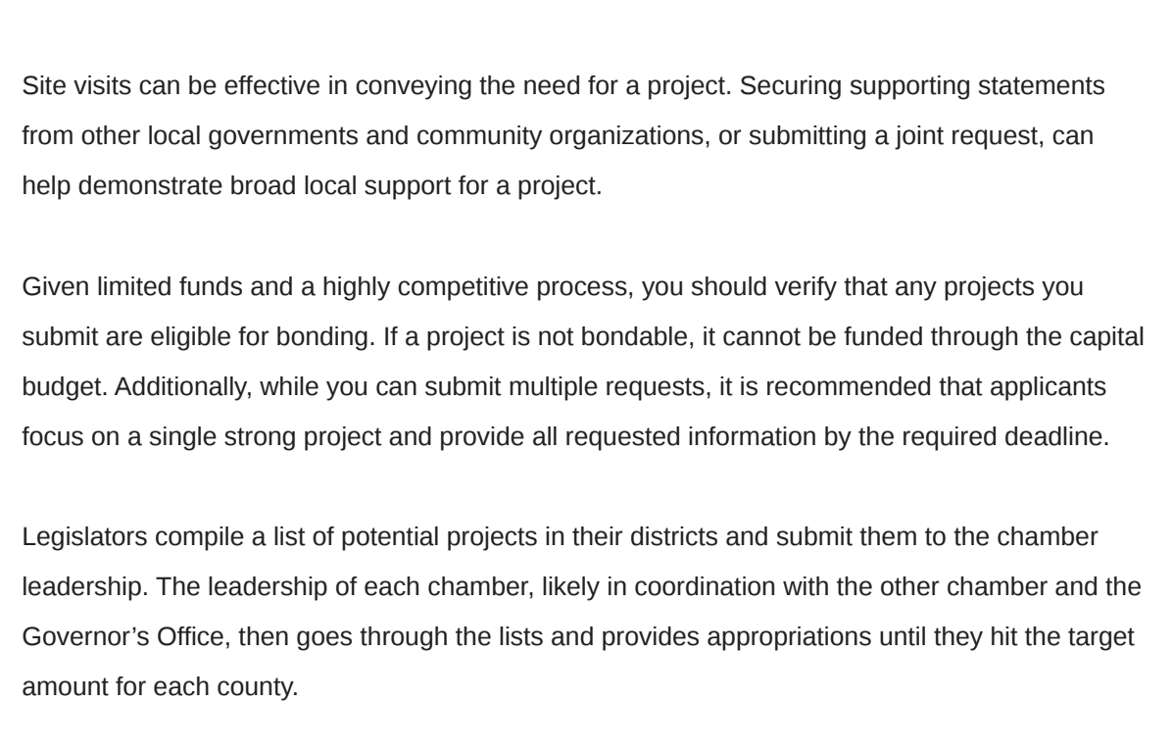
Governor and DCY announce funding for six child wellness campuses

Governor DeWine and Department of Children and Youth (DCY) Director Kara Wente today announced funding support for six child wellness campuses across Ohio. The state operating budget (House Bill 96) provided $10 million in each fiscal year for DCY to establish child wellness campuses. The campuses are designed to be short-term crisis stabilization placement options for children and youth in custody of a public children services agency (PCSA) or who are at risk of being in custody of a PCSA, as determined by the PCSA.

DCY conducted a competitive process and finalized six campuses:

- Talbert House Inc., Hamilton County
- Unison Behavioral Health Group, Northwest Ohio
- Safe Opportunity Foster Alliance, Southeast Ohio (Expansion)
- Buckeye Ranch Inc., Central Ohio
- Cleveland Christian Home Inc., Cuyahoga County (Expansion)
- Champions Bridge, Franklin County

Read more in the news release.


Child Wellness Campuses
Ohio Expands Child Wellness Campuses to Keep Children Closer to Home
Unison Behavioral Health Group
Northwest Ohio (Toledo)
Talbert House Inc.
Hamilton County (Cincinnati)
Safe Opportunity Foster Alliance
Southeast Ohio (Gallipolis)
Cleveland Christian Home Inc.
Cuyahoga County (Cleveland)
Champions Bridge
Franklin County (Columbus)
Buckeye Ranch Inc.
Central Ohio (Grove City)
Mike DeWine
Governor of Ohio
Ohio Department of Children & Youth
Franklin County is served by Champions Bridge and Buckeye Ranch Inc.

Bipartisan infrastructure bill introduced in Congress, would improve local funding streams

Last week, the Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act (H.R. 7437) was introduced in Congress. The bill would improve federal transportation programs to provide better access to resources for local governments.

To help increase county access to federal transportation funding, the BASICS Act would make commonsense improvements, including:

- Increasing local access to formula funding by growing the overall share of the Federal-aid highway program that "suballocates," or is made available for locally selected projects.
- Maintaining robust federal investments in bridges, but ensuring local access through suballocation.
- Shoring up project selection by strengthening metropolitan planning organizations with additional resources and authorities to program federal dollars.
- Establishing a dedicated rural and nonmetropolitan planning program to support rural and small communities and funds for federally designated regional or rural/regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs).
- Strengthening intergovernmental partnerships by encouraging states to collaborate with state associations of counties when using formula funds in rural areas without any planning organizations.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) worked closely with coalition partners and bipartisan leadership to author this legislation. NACo fully endorses the Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success Act to help counties maintain and strengthen our nation's infrastructure and transportation systems.

More information about the bill can be found here.

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

Back to Top

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

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

Defiance commissioners open bids on Evansport sewer upgrade

Crescent News, February 9, 2026

Defiance County commissioners opened bids on the continued upgrade of Evansport's wastewater system during their Monday meeting.

Three bids were received to improve the system's collection system: Dangler Excavating, Paulding, $500,650; Visu-Sewer of Ohio, LLC, Pataskala, $599,839; and S&S Directional Boring, Ltd., Bryan, $843,840.

The engineer's estimate was $442,750, according to Lorenzo Zamora of Maumee Valley Planning Organization who opened the bids.

Commissioners took the bids under advisement pending review before one is accepted, or the bids are rejected.

Work continues on the rehabilitation of Evansport's wastewater treatment plant on Williams-Defiance County Line Road, located just west of the unincorporated town. Contractor R.G. Construction, Inc., Defiance, has been working on that $2.7 million project since last year.

In another matter, commissioners received an update from Defiance County Warren Schlatter on county landfill operations.

He reported that intake during January totaled 55,025 cubic yards, shy of the January monthly record set in 2023 (59,218 cubic yards), but considerably more than last year's amount for that month (48,926 cubic yards).

Schlatter also reported that bids will be opened on Feb. 19 for the construction of two new landfill cells (8 and 9).

And he noted that the first waste was placed Wednesday in new cell 7. The first five feet of waste must be handled specially to ensure that nothing pokes through the plastic liner on the bottom of the cell.

Northeast District

Medina County officials commission demographic study

WVXU, February 9, 2026

Medina County officials are taking issue with a state projection that the county will lose population by 2050.

In 2024, Medina County had a population of 184,625, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The state's projection estimates the county's population will drop to 181,084 by mid-century, a 0.76% drop. The state overall is also expected to lose population.

"All our indications are when you look at what's going on in housing and workforce and everything that's going on, it doesn't match with our local observations or records," County Commissioner Stephen Hambley said.

Hambley and the other county commissioners approved their own demographic study, which is being performed by International Strategic Analysis, a firm that provides forecasting, research and consulting to the public and private sectors.

"They're gonna look at the population forecasts that have already been identified and maybe indicate where the discrepancies are," he said.

The analysis will also include population forecasts for 2030, 2040 and 2050; an assessment of demographic drivers like birth rates, migration, housing and workforce trends; the impact of demographic changes on the economy and a strategic plan to optimize the county's future, according to officials. The analysis is projected to cost $7,000.

The data will be vital for many planning projects, from housing and transit to education, as well as grant applications, Hambley said.

Central District

Licking County Planning Commission OKs St. Albans Township plan to ban data centers

The Reporting project, February 4, 2026

The Licking County Planning Commission gave its blessing Monday night to a proposal by St. Albans Township to become the first in the county to effectively ban data centers.

The commission also heard an update during the Feb. 2 meeting about efforts by The Shelly Company to operate asphalt- and concrete-mixing facilities along Raccoon Creek just outside Alexandria in St. Albans Township.

The commission wasn't being asked to take any action on the request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by Shelly Materials, a Shelly Company affiliate, to revise the floodplain map for property it leases from local resident James Geiger. But the commission, which previously rejected the Shelly request for a permit to operate there, could be asked at a future date to take action in the matter.

Area residents who filled most of the seats in the commission's meeting room at the Licking County Administration Building on Feb. 2 spoke for the data-center ban and against the floodplain map revision.

Planning Commission member Steve Holloway launched the discussion of data centers when he asked Planning Director Carson Combs what could be done at the county level to manage the wave of data centers washing over central Ohio. Of the 194 data centers in Ohio, 113 of them are in central Ohio, according to Data Center Map, which tracks data centers around the world.

Holloway said he has heard concerns from residents about the resources used by data centers, especially water and electricity.

Southwest District

Hamilton County files lawsuit over insulin pricing

Spectrum News, February 10, 2026

A new lawsuit filed by Hamilton County is suing pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and drug manufacturers, alleging they unlawfully inflated the price of insulin and other diabetes medications for years.
The county's lawsuit claims it paid high prices for insulin for employees and dependents because of an illegal pricing scheme between manufacturers and PBMs, including CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and OptumRx and manufacturers Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi.

"Some health care companies are prioritizing profits over patients," County Prosecutor Connie Pillich said. "Our goal is to protect taxpayers and hold those responsible accountable."

Pillich filed the lawsuit along with the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners.

The lawsuit seeks financial compensation for taxpayers and health plan members, and a court order to stop the alleged practices.

"Insulin is a lifesaving medication that has been around for decades, yet families and employers are paying more than ever to access it," Commission President Stephanie Summerow Dumas said. "When drug companies and middlemen drive up costs, it hurts our employees, their families, and ultimately taxpayers. That's why Hamilton County is taking action so we can demand fairness and accountability without putting taxpayers at financial risk, and push for a system that puts people first."

Hamilton County provides health coverage to approximately 8,800 plan members.

Southeast District

Washington County residents pack commissioners meeting over proposed data center

WTAP, February 12, 2026

There was standing room only at Thursday's meeting of the Washington County Board of Commissioners as residents gathered to express their concerns with a proposed data center.

The Washington County Commissioners approved a letter of intent and nondisclosure agreement in January to begin conversations with potential developers about a data center, a facility that houses the infrastructure to manage digital data and applications.

Following the NDA, dozens of residents packed the commissioners meeting on Feb. 12, with many expressing concerns about a perceived lack of transparency from officials and with the potential impact of a data center on the community and local environment.

Commissioner Charlie Schilling emphasized that current discussions are preliminary, with no concrete development plans in place.

"There has not been any agreements signed or anything of that nature," Schilling said. "The Board of Commissioners is working with the school district and the township to provide a development agreement that outlines what the pilot would look like, what things would look like within the community as far as that goes."

Resident Justin Arthur asked the commissioners what the benefits of bringing a data center to the area would be. Schilling cited employment opportunities.

"This comes down to jobs, and being able to support the local economy up there," Schilling said.

The commissioners were unable to say how many jobs a data center would create, though Schilling said they would have that information prior to making an agreement.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

FEBRUARY 20
CORSA Board of Directors' Meeting

FEBRUARY 27
CEBCO Board of Directors' Meeting

MARCH 13
CORSA Board of Directors' Meeting

Copyright © 2026 CCAO, All rights reserved.

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