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INTEGRITY
Choosing to do what is right, regardless of recognition, while accepting accountability for your actions and decisions.
2C
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COUNTIES CURRENT
CCAO

February 23, 2026

CCAO and CORSA staff were pleased to join current and former Wayne County Commissioners for a tour of the new Wayne County Jail facility. This important project highlights what can be achieved through strong collaboration between state and county partners and a shared commitment to public safety.

(L - R: CORSA Membership Services Manager Ali Redmond, CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, former Wayne County Commissioners Ann Obrecht and Sue Smail, current Wayne County Commissioners Dave McMillen and Jon Hofstetter, former CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz, and CCAO Policy Analyst Kenton Dresbach)

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Ohio Counties Scholarship accepting applications

The 2026 Ohio Counties Scholarship application is 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.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

Anthem

STATE AND FEDERAL

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Ohio Office of Budget and Management releases memo on potential impact of property tax elimination

Earlier this month, the Office of Budget and Management issued a public memo regarding the impact that the elimination of property taxation would have on Ohio.

The memo is broken into three brief sections, which this article echoes.

Catastrophic Impacts on Essential Local Services
In three bullet points, OBM discusses the the likely loss of education services, public safety services (particularly in smaller, rural communities), and human services such as senior services, addiction recovery services, and developmental disabilities services.

Revenue Replacement Challenges
OBM estimates that for the state to offset the loss of local property tax funding through revenue sharing, the state would need to potentially quintuple the state income tax up to 15% (from the current 2.75% flat rate) and/or triple the state sales tax rate to up to 18% (from the current state rate of 5.75%).

The memo does not discuss changes to the county permissive sales tax rate, which is capped at 1.50% (a secondary cap of 2.00% is possible in some circumstances).

Additional Risks and Considerations
Here OBM cites the predictability that property taxes give to local governments compared to the more potentially volatile income and sales tax.

Other comments in this section include the loss of local control that would result from funding for services being directed by the state government, and likely debt defaults and local bond rating downgrading.

You can read the full memo here.

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.

Nursing home payment ruling may have impact on state budget

Last year, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Ohio Department of Medicaid was underpaying nursing homes due to a difference in how the department was paying the facilities and how the payment formula was written in House Bill 33 (the state operating budget for SFY 2024 and SFY 2025).

While the General Assembly changed the statutory language on how the payments should be calculated to match the method that the Department of Medicaid actually utilized, it is currently unclear if the state will be required to make back payments based on what nursing homes should have been receiving.

A filing by the Department has estimated that, if back payments are required. the state would have to appropriate an additional $572 million.

While the nursing home payment situation does not directly pertain to counties, the potential that the state may need to appropriate an additional $572 million for this purpose could have implications on funding for county programming.

An article from the Dayton Daily News earlier this month has additional information about the situation.

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WEDNESDAY: 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.

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

Putnam commissioners want to continue sales tax

LimaOhio.com, February 19, 2026
The Putnam County commissioners took the first step Thursday to keep its total sales tax at 7% for the next five years.

The commissioners accepted a resolution and set two public hearings to continue a 0.25% sales tax to help with the county's operational expenses. This portion of the sales tax raised $1.3 million last year.

"For the county, it keeps us solvent," commissioner Brad Brubaker said. "The county has no debt, so we're able to continue to operate without having to go for additional property taxes. We're not increasing it. We're maintaining with our income."

The next step is two public hearings, with the public invited to speak about the sales tax during public hearings at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Thursday, March 26 in the Assembly Room at the Putnam County Courthouse, 245 E. Main St., Ottawa.

The general fund pays for law enforcement and emergency medical services, the largest expenses for the county, as well as other county services.

The commissioners also set aside $268,000 last year for capital improvements and maintaining existing structures from a second half-percent sales tax, as they've done since 1987.

The state takes in 5.75% of sales tax, with Putnam County levying the remaining 1.25%. Back in 2014, commissioners dropped a 0.25% sales tax that had been on the books to pay off the county's jail, but the state increased its portion by that same amount.

Northeast District

Medina County Commissioners have no plans to take up resolutions related to ICE

Cleveland.com, February 18, 2026
Medina County commissioners on Tuesday made clear they are not currently considering any resolution that would limit local law enforcement from cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, despite calls from residents at the last two commission meetings.

The statement came during the public comment portion of the commissioners' meeting Tuesday morning, after residents again raised concerns about whether the county should adopt a citizen-drafted resolution that would limit cooperation between local law enforcement agencies and ICE.

Commissioner Aaron Harrison said he appreciates the discussion and the democratic process, but the board has not taken up, debated, or postponed any such measure because no resolution has ever been formally introduced by any commissioners.

"We don't have anything in front of us," he said. "Unless something changes and there's a motion and second on that specific resolution, we wouldn't have anything in front of us to act upon."

The comments appeared to pour cold water on expectations among some community members that the board might soon consider a resolution limiting cooperation with ICE.

Central District

County Commissioners address public concerns over proposed Urbana data center

Peak of Ohio, February 19, 2026
The Champaign County Commissioners held a public meeting on Thursday afternoon at the request of residents to address concerns surrounding a proposed data center development in Urbana.

Commissioners Nino Vitale and Tim Cassady told attendees they recognize the community's concerns regarding energy use, water impact, environmental questions, and quality of life. Both said they are actively exploring avenues related to the cancellation of the land agreement connected to the project.

The central issue, according to the commissioners, is the legality of altering or canceling the existing agreement. A real estate purchase agreement was signed in September 2024 between the Champaign Economic Partnership (CEP), acting as the county's agent, and Highland Realty.

Commissioners did not provide a timeline for potential next steps.

The meeting followed a letter sent last week by the board to Urbana city officials and media outlets. In that letter, commissioners stated they were originally approached in March 2024 about selling land for an industrial park along South State Route 68 and were not informed at that time that a data center was being considered.

All parcels involved are located within Urbana city limits. City Council has already approved annexation, zoning, and rezoning for the property, as well as a Community Reinvestment Area agreement.

Project details were presented to the Urbana City Council this week under the name "Urbana Technology Hub." Plans call for a 460,000-square-foot, single-story data center near the intersection of State Routes 55 and 68. Developers have described the project as a more than $1 billion private investment projected to generate over $3 million annually in new tax revenue and create between 30 and 80 permanent jobs.

Public comment at the commissioners meeting included residents and representatives from local organizations, including Cedar Bog Nature Preserve and Vancrest of Urbana nursing home. Several attendees stated they plan to continue voicing concerns.

Southwest District

Commissioners choose company to complete jail assessment

Daily Advocate, February 16, 2026
Darke County Commissioners and the Darke County Sheriff's Office are a step closer to determining what needs to be done with the Darke County Jail/Sheriff's Office. On Thursday, Feb. 12, Commissioners Matt Aultman, Aaron Flatter and Marshall Combs approved a company to assess the jail's needs.

Darke County recently received a grant in the amount of $136,809 from the Local Jail Capital Project Program that is administered through the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction for a Jail Needs Assessment to evaluate the existing Darke County Jail/Sheriff's Office. After sifting through proposals from six businesses wanting to conduct the assessment and create a facility master plan, the commissioners and Sheriff Mark Whittaker chose DLZ National, Inc. to complete the work. The cost of the assessment and facility master plan is $58,000.

Commission President Aultman pointed out the assessment cost will give them some room to work in case there are additional items that need to be addressed. Additional items that fall under the scope of the grant may also be completed. He warned the county wants to get as close to the full awarded amount as possible. If they have to send grant money back to the state, it could affect how much they receive from future grants.

Sheriff Whittaker is hoping the assessment will be completed by July. Where they go from there is undetermined. The assessment will show the needs, but how the county pays to address those needs may be determined by how the state addresses property taxes. Aultman said the county may need to wait until there has been a final determination on how the state deals with property taxes before they can address the jail's needs.

The Goodwill store in Greenville is expected to stick around for at least another five years. The commissioners agreed to a lease extension for the business for five years. The cost of the lease is $61,710 payable in equal monthly installments of $5,142.50. Goodwill will have a five-year option at the end of the first five years that would raise the lease to $63,162 that is payable in monthly installments of $5,263.50.

Southeast District

Harrison County commissioners refinance $9 million jail loan through USDA, cut rates to 2.125%–3.25%

YourOhioNews, February 16, 2026
The Harrison County Commissioners made a move at their Feb. 11 meeting that would significantly lower their interest rates on their multi-million dollar jail loan. The original loan with Huntington Bank was set at 4.75% interest, but now they have moved to refinance that into two government loans through the United States Department of Agriculture.

Commissioner Dustin Corder read two resolutions, which were approved unanimously, to allow the board to transfer down to two USDA loans with interest rates of 3.25% on one loan for $3 million and 2.125% on the other loan for $6 million.

"This is authorizing the issuance of bonds in the amount of not to exceed $9 million for the purpose of constructing, furnishing, equipping and improving a justice center with related site improvements … and retiring notes previously issued for such purpose; and authorizing and approving related matters," one resolution stated.

The board decided to issue bonds for retiring "Outstanding Notes" where they will be purchased by the U.S. Government, acting through the Rural Utilities Service within the USDA. Julia Wood of the USDA was present and recognized Clerk Misty Bailie calling her "indispensible" in assisting their office providing much information.

"And she's always been pleasant and so good to deal with, especially with our master outlay sheets tracking every penny [and] she's been wonderful," Wood told the board.

Wood said the resolution covering the $3 million loan's first payment would be approximately $135,084 and the second resolution was for the $6 million loan for an approximate annual payment of $224,172 stretching 40 years. Wood added that there was no penalty if the county wished to make a larger payment or pay one or both of those loans totaling $9 million off sooner.

"There's no penalty for that," she said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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FEBRUARY 27
CEBCO Board of Directors' Meeting

MARCH 13
CORSA Board of Directors' Meeting

MARCH 20
CCAO Board of Directors' Meeting

MARCH 27
CEBCO Board of Directors' Meeting

APRIL 10
CEBCO Annual Meeting

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