



CIDS

County Information and Data Service

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DATES TO REMEMBER

MARCH 1-5, 2008	NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, HILTON WASHINGTON & TOWERS, WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 5, 2008	OHIO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION BREAKFAST, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - ROOM B-369, WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 5, 2008	OHIO STATEHOOD DAY
MARCH 13, 2008	CCAO GENERAL GOVERNMENT & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE, CCAO OFFICES, COLUMBUS
MARCH 14, 2008	CCAO BOARD OF TRUSTEES, CCAO OFFICES, COLUMBUS
APRIL 6-12, 2008	NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK
APRIL 21, 2008	NW OHIO COMMISSIONERS & ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, MERCER COUNTY (CELINA)
MAY 5, 2008	SE OHIO COMMISSIONERS & ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, MUSKINGUM COUNTY, (ZANESVILLE)
JUNE 8-10, 2008	CCAO/CEAO ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE, LAKE COUNTY (PAINESVILLE)
JULY 11-15, 2008	NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE, KANSAS CITY (JACKSON COUNTY), MISSOURI

ASSOCIATION NEWS

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY HEATS UP IN OHIO; NACo WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

With the primary quickly approaching, the presidential candidates and their surrogates are criss-crossing Ohio looking to drum up support. This is our chance to be heard and make sure that county issues have a place in the 2008 presidential election!

As the field of candidates begins to narrow, it is more important than ever for county officials to be part of the campaign. The National Association of Counties (NACo) needs you to attend events and speak to the candidates about issues that matter to counties. Together, we can encourage the candidates to restore the county-federal partnership and find out where they stand on issues like rural development, infrastructure, emergency preparedness and health care. NACo has brochures and buttons for any of your interactions with presidential candidates or their staff.

For more information about how you can spread the word to the candidates please contact Kim Rogers at (202) 942-4237 or email krogers@naco.org or www.nacoblog.blogspot.com.

CIDS PUBLICATION CHANGE EFFECTIVE MARCH 7

Beginning with the March 7th issue, CIDS will only be e-mailed to Boards of County Commissioners. Currently, CCAO mails four copies to each Board of County Commissioners on a weekly basis. This practice has become cost prohibitive due to the increasing postal rates. CCAO will mail copies of CIDS by request only. To request that copies be mailed please contact Amanda Jones, CCAO Administrative Assistant, at (614) 220-7985, (888) 757-1904 or ajones@ccao.org.

NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK – APRIL 6-12

In 2008, the National County Government Week's theme is "Protecting Our Children." Counties can show their residents the many ways they work to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of children in sensible and cost-effective ways.

National County Government Week (NCGW) is an annual celebration of county government. First held in 1991, the goal of county government week is to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's counties. There are activities at the national, state and local levels during county government week. More than 1,000 counties annually participate in NCGW by holding a variety of programs and events. These include tours of county facilities, presentations in schools, meetings with business and community leaders, recognition programs for volunteers, briefings on environmental projects, and adoption of proclamations. For more information go to www.naco.org and click on the story on the front page.

CCAO BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES

Enclosed with this issue of CIDS for county commissioners are the minutes from the January 18, 2008 meeting of the CCAO Board of Trustees.

CCAO distributes the minutes after they are approved by the board. The next CCAO Board meeting will be held on March 14, 2008.

OHIO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION BREAKFAST

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the Ohio Congressional Delegation Breakfast to be held at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5 in the Rayburn House Office Building – Room B369. Call now to make your appointments to meet with them during the conference!

Attendance at the breakfast is open to all Ohio conference attendees and their traveling companions. For more information about the conference or to register for the Ohio Congressional Delegation Breakfast, please contact Mary Jane Neiman, CCAO Public Relations Associate, at (614) 220-7979, (888) 775-1904 or mjneiman@ccao.org.

OHIO STATEHOUSE MUSEUM PHOTO PROJECT; PHOTOS DUE APRIL 1

The Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB) has developed a design plan to create updated, high-tech, interactive exhibits and educational programs at the Ohio Statehouse to *Enrich the Experience* of school children and visitors. CSRAB and CCAO have partnered on this project are seeking the assistance of all counties. Information about the project is posted on CCAO's front page at www.ccao.org.

The new Ohio Statehouse Museum will be housed on the ground level and will interpret the Statehouse as the *People's House, a Stage for Democratic Action and the Seat of Ohio's State Government*. Exhibits will shine a light on the core values that form the foundation for Ohio's democracy and highlight Ohioans from every county and region of the state. The design plan will highlight individuals who have come to serve their fellow citizens and make a difference either as governors, legislators, business people, farmers, concerned citizens and even school children.

The Ohio Statehouse Web site highlights plans of the interactive museum, including a fly-through

video. The Ohio Statehouse Museum Web site portal is featured on the front page and under the education tab of the Statehouse Web site – www.ohiostatehouse.org. The new Ohio Statehouse Museum is scheduled to be completed in early March 2009.

How can counties participate? Throughout the Museum, a series of graphic face panels will highlight Ohioans who have, are or will be participating in the democratic process. CSRAB and CCAO are asking for your assistance in collecting these images. Photos are requested that represent Ohioans from all races, genders, socio-economic backgrounds, professions, educational backgrounds and regions of the state. The images will include some of Ohio's first citizens as well as some of its most recent.

Some images will be entered into a touch screen database so that Statehouse visitors may look up each individual and learn something about him or her. It is anticipated that the images will be rotated on a regular basis to keep the exhibit fresh and reflect the continued vibrancy of Ohio's democratic process. Specifically, your county is invited to submit the images of up to 25 individuals. Please review the memo and criteria sheet for detailed information.

In order to maintain the aggressive design schedule, we ask that all submissions must be received by CSRAB by **April 1, 2008**

Thank you for participating in this project and helping to *Enrich the Experience* of school children and visitors of all ages at Ohio's Statehouse for generations to come. If you have any questions, please contact the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board at (614) 752-9777.

COUNTY ACTIVITIES

GUERNSEY COUNTY OFFICIALS APPEAL HOSPITAL CLOSURE TO GOVERNOR STRICKLAND

Recently, Guernsey County local elected officials and community leaders visited Governor Ted Strickland to discuss the economic impact and safety concerns resulting from the planned closure

of the Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare Cambridge Campus. The campus is targeted for closure because of a projected shortfall in the state budget. State officials have said closing the Cambridge hospital along with a similar facility in the Dayton area would save Ohio an estimated \$28 million.

"When we walked away (from the meeting), we all had a good feeling," Guernsey County Commissioner Steve Allen said of the bi-partisan group who met with Strickland. "I don't know if we can change their minds, but we are not going to give up on this. In the past, we have been given an opportunity to present facts and make a case (opposing the closure), but we didn't have that opportunity this time until we met with the governor."

The Guernsey County Department of Job and Family Services estimated the potential economic impact on the county at the loss of 130 jobs. Based on an average salary of \$28,244, the economic impact of losing 130 jobs would be \$3.6 million the first year alone. The total financial impact could rise to as high as \$21 million over time. Employees of the Cambridge facility will reportedly receive a six-month severance package, but the Department said state employees at other locations where closures have been proposed could receive a one to two-year severance package.

Guernsey County Sheriff Mike McCauley informed Strickland of the safety concerns arising from the proposed closure, as it could cost his office more than \$200,000 in additional expenses and result in fewer deputies patrolling the county. McCauley explained that to transfer patients it requires two deputies per cruiser to transport an individual. Trips lasting four to five hours to transport patients to a facility in Athens or Massillon, as opposed to fifteen to thirty minutes to the Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare Cambridge Campus, would place a financial burden on the county. (Source: *The Daily Jeffersonian*)

STATE ACTIVITIES

CHANGES IN MONTHLY LGF & LLGSF DISTRIBUTION CASH FLOW OCCURRING IN CY 2008

During the month of December information was sent by the Ohio Department of Taxation by email to local officials to update them on changes to the distribution of local government funds during calendar year 2008. **Detailed information is attached to this issue of CIDS.**

Since July 2001, the three local distribution funds - the Local Government Fund (LGF), Local Government Revenue Assistance Fund (LGRAF), and Library and Local Government Support Fund (LLGSF) - have been subject to a "freeze." During calendar year 2007, distributions from the three local distribution funds have equaled the monthly amounts distributed during calendar year 2006. However, the freeze ends beginning in January 2008. The current state operating budget (Am. Sub. H.B. 119) contains a variety of changes related to the local distribution funds. For more information go to the following link: http://tax.ohio.gov/channels/other/documents/explanation_of_local_distribution_fund_changes_final.pdf.

COST OF VACANT & ABANDONED PROPERTIES

Vacant and abandoned properties are a significant problem in cities across Ohio, costing taxpayers tens of millions of dollars a year in extra municipal services and lost tax revenue. ReBuild Ohio is calling upon the Ohio General Assembly and Strickland Administration to adopt a comprehensive new policy approach to Ohio's neighborhood and housing crisis. Findings were documented in a recently completed year-long research study, "\$60 Million and Counting: The Cost of Vacant and Abandoned Properties in Eight Ohio Cities," conducted by Community Research Partners (CRP). The study supports ReBuild Ohio's mission of promoting reclamation of vacant and abandoned properties for economic vitality and enhanced quality of life throughout the state and CRP's mission to strengthen Ohio communities through data, information, and knowledge.

The research documents the magnitude and cost of the vacant and abandoned properties problem in eight diverse Ohio cities – Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Ironton, Lima, Springfield, Toledo, and Zanesville. The research found:

- 25,000 vacant & abandoned properties
- Widespread vacancies in both large and small cities
- \$15 million in city service costs
- \$49 million in lost property tax revenues to local governments and school districts
- Weakened neighborhood housing markets with evidence of property flipping
- Limited capacity of cities, on their own, to track & address vacant & abandoned properties

The research is being used by Rebuild Ohio to support a multi-faceted state policy agenda to address this crisis. A copy of the full report, executive summary and policy recommendations are available online at www.rebuildohio.org and www.communityresearchpartners.org.

OHIO SUPREME COURT RULES NATURAL GAS PIPELINE COMPANIES DO NOT QUALIFY FOR LOWER PROPERTY TAX RATE

Last week, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation is an interstate-pipeline company - not a natural gas company - and is not entitled to a multi-million dollar property tax refund. Justices released a 7-0 opinion reversing a decision of the Ohio Board of Tax Appeals (BTA). The BTA had ruled that Columbia Transmission should have had its personal property assessed at a 25% valuation rate, rather than the 88% rate for pipeline companies. Columbia Gas Transmission is one of 16 subsidiaries of NiSource, a group that also includes Columbia Gas of Ohio. Columbia Transmission operates a natural gas pipeline through a number of states and maintains an underground system for storing natural gas.

In 2000, the General Assembly reduced the assessment rate on the value of public utility

personal property of Ohio natural gas companies from 88% to 25 percent. The State Tax Commissioner subsequently assessed Columbia Transmission's personal property for tax years 2000 and 2001 at the 88% rate that applies to pipeline companies. The commissioner found that Columbia was not a natural gas company under the state law because it does not supply or distribute natural gas directly to end-use customers. The commissioner also noted that the company was subject to regulation by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees interstate pipelines, and not the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, which regulates natural gas companies in the state. Columbia Transmission took the matter to the BTA, which reversed the tax commissioner and said the firm should be taxed at the 25% rate. The Ohio Supreme Court reinstated the tax commissioner's 88% assessment.

Justice Robert Cupp, writing for the court, said evidence in the case shows that Columbia Transmission was primarily engaged in the business of transporting natural gas through a network of pipelines in ten states. "Columbia does not own any of the natural gas that it transports, nor does it own any distribution or supplying property. Further evidence revealed that Columbia's pipelines are not configured to provide a substantial delivery service to residential customers," Justice Cupp said. He said "the vast majority" of the company's pipeline business was the transportation of natural gas. "Any natural gas supplied to its direct-connect customers is incidental to Columbia's primary business as a pipeline company." As a result, the transmission subsidiary does not fall within the definition of a natural gas company under state law.

At stake for schools and local governments across Ohio was about \$31 million a year in personal property taxes that Columbia Transmission and similar companies pay. The Ohio Department of Taxation said Columbia Transmission had been paying the higher rate "under protest" while the case moved forward. Had the tax commissioner lost, Columbia and other pipeline companies would have been due about \$200 million in refunds and interest.

Legislation (HB 319-Gibbs) is pending before the House Public Utilities Committee which essentially would codify the decision of the Board of Tax Appeals by reducing the public utility personal property tax assessment rate for new pipeline company property from 88% to 25%. This legislation also exempts pipeline companies from the public utility excise tax and would subject such companies to the commercial activity tax. While a fiscal note has not been prepared on HB 319, it is clear that this legislation would reduce property tax revenue for local governments.

OHIO'S PUBLIC SCHOOL – 7TH BEST IN U.S.

Ohio's public education system was rated as the seventh best in the nation in *Education Week's* 12th annual "Quality Counts 2008" report. Ohio earned an overall grade of B-. No state earned higher than a B, and the overall grade for the nation was a C. The Quality Counts 2008 Grading Summary for Ohio follows:

	OHIO	SCORE OF AVERAGE STATE
Chance for success	B-	C+
K-12 achievement	C-	D+
Standards, assessments & accountability	A	B
Transitions & alignment	C+	C
Teaching profession	C+	C
School finance	B-	C+

The annual study, which tracks a wide array of state policies for improving education, is available on *Education Week's* website at www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2008/01/01.

FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR GUARANTEED RURAL RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development the opened the application period for its Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program (GRRHP). More than \$129 million in funding is available for Fiscal Year 2008. The application deadline is September 26, 2008. The

purpose of the GRRHP is to increase the supply of affordable rural rental housing, through the use of loan guarantees that encourage partnerships between Rural Development, private lenders and public agencies.

Ohio has the largest portfolio of Section 538 financed properties in the nation with more than 1,400 units now available and more under construction. Working with area partners Ohio obligated 7 loans which funded construction of 302 housing units. Two of the loans funded family-based projects and five funded senior projects. Cooperative Ohio accounted for more than 20 percent of all 538 loans made nationally. These efforts helped Ohio retain its designation as the nation's #1 Guarantee Housing Program.

Responses should be forwarded to the Ohio State Office, Federal Building, Room 507, 200 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43215-2477. All submissions will be reviewed, scored and processed for funding. Applications received prior to April 25, 2008 will be given priority ranking and scoring. For additional information on the Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program please contact Melodie Taylor-Ward at (614) 255-2418.

VOINOVICH URGES U.S. EPA TO PROVIDE FUNDING & FLEXIBILITY IN COMPLYING WITH WATER & SEWER MANDATES

Last week, U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, sent a letter to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide more funding and flexibility for cities in complying with EPA's mandates on water and sewer infrastructure. While cities are forced to comply with federal regulations or face federal fines, the funding is nearly nonexistent – making these regulations unfunded mandates.

The proposed 2009 budget cuts funding to the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund to \$555 million – the lowest funding level in the program's history. Senator Voinovich would like to increase the budget to \$1.35 billion to ensure Washington is not forcing cities into bankruptcy. The cost for

Ohio's cities is estimated to be around \$12 billion. That's more than 10 times what the entire nation received in funding to help comply with these mandates. These costs – which are often larger than a small city's entire yearly budget – are incurred by cities and passed along to taxpayers. To read a copy of the letter online go to: <http://voinovich.senate.gov/public/index.cfm>. Click on Newscenter>Press Releases and scroll to the 2/11/08 letter.

NACo ACTIVITIES

NACo 73rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and Jackson County (Kansas City), Missouri invite you to join over 2,000 appointed and elected officials from across the nation this summer for NACo's 73rd Annual Conference & Exposition to be held July 11-15, 2008. This is the only national conference and exposition dedicated solely to county government. Conference registration is now open! Register for the conference and housing online at www.naco.org to save \$25 per registrant. Click on the article about the conference on the front page. For more information please contact Mary Jane Neiman, CCAO Public Relations Associate, at (614) 220-7979, (888) 757-1904 or mjneiman@ccao.org.

NACIO AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE COMPETITION

Counties across the nation are invited to submit their best communication efforts for recognition by the National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO), an affiliate of NACo. Entry categories for the Awards of Excellence Competition include: annual reports, brochure & multiple-page booklets, internal & external publications, writing, graphic design, photography, audiovisual productions, special projects, and computer media. Submissions must have been completed from January 1 to December 31, 2007. Entries must be primarily the work of the entrant with outside assistance strictly limited to support functions, such as typesetting and printing.

Deadlines and entry fees:

- NACIO members - \$35 (by 5:00 p.m. on March 7) or \$50 (after March 7); or
- Non-members - \$50 (by 5:00 p.m. on March 7) or \$65 (after March 7).

No entries will be accepted after March 28, 2008. Entry forms can be downloaded from www.nacio.org. For more information please contact Mary Jane Neiman, CCAO Public Relations Associate, at (614) 220-7979, (888) 757-1904 or mjneiman@ccao.org.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARD

The NACo Arts and Culture Award program is designed to encourage counties to submit successful programs that have used arts and cultural activities to address not only the quality of life, but also social problems in their communities. Cuyahoga County won the award in 2005 for their "Arts and Culture as Economic Development Grant Program" project.

Eligibility is extended not only to outstanding arts and historical preservation programs, but also to innovative funding processes that have been used to fund arts and cultural programs. Both ongoing and onetime projects are eligible for the award, but must meet the following requirements:

- The program or project must have been initiated since January 2002.
- County officials and/or staff, as part of their official duties, must have played a significant role in developing and implementing the program or project.

Each program will be evaluated based on: demonstrated community impact, innovation, community/county partnership, leadership, and transferability. Application deadline: **April 11, 2008**. The winning county will be presented with an award during a special awards ceremony held during NACo's Annual Conference.

For more information please contact Deseree Gardner, Research Associate, NACo, 25 Massachusetts Avenue, NW – Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 942-4228, fax

(202) 393-2630, or dgardner@naco.org. Download the 2008 Arts and Culture Award Program Application at www.naco.org. Click on Awards>Arts and Culture Awards.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS

OPC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WETLANDS WORKSHOP

The Ohio Planning Conference, the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and The Ohio State University are sponsoring the "OPC Professional Development Wetlands Workshop" from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, March 28, 2008. The workshop will be held at The Ohio State University, Knowlton Hall, 275 West Woodruff, in Columbus.

This workshop is designed to train planners on the importance and types of wetlands and their application in planning. Participants will have classroom training and the opportunity to tour different types of wetlands. Wear casual clothing and shoes for outdoors. This event has been submitted for four hours of AICP Certification Maintenance credit.

Registration fee: \$60 by March 15 or \$75 after March 15 or student registration - \$20 by March 15 or \$25 after March 15. Space is limited. For more information please contact Jennifer Evans-Cowley, Ph.D., AICP, Associate Professor and Planning Education at a Distance Program Director City and Regional Planning, Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture, The Ohio State University, 275 West Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210-1138, (614) 247-7479, or cowley.11@osu.edu. Register online at <http://quest.cvent.com/i.aspx?1Q.P1,029B97E4-CB85-4914-BA2A-31C21C27E78A>

ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COUNCIL CONFERENCE

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Education and the Environmental Education Council of Ohio (EECO) will host the "41ST Annual EECO Conference" on April 24-27, 2008 at Mohican State Park Lodge and Conference Center, 3116 State Route 3, in Loudenville. The

mission of the conference is to promote and facilitate environmental education and to develop partnerships to lead to a more environmentally literate population and a healthier environment. The conference theme is divided into three strands: green building, Ohio's natural and cultural history, and outdoor education. For a copy of the agenda and a complete list of registration options go to www.eecoonline.org/conferences/Announcement.htm. For more information please contact Dennis Clement, Ohio EPA, Office of Environmental Education, P.O. Box 1049, Columbus, OH 43216-1049, (614) 644-2048, fax (614) 728-1275 or dennis.clement@epa.state.oh.us.

CLASSIFIEDS

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT DIRECTOR

The Licking County Board of Commissioners seek candidates with proven leadership, management and communication skills for the position of Director to lead the Child Support Enforcement Agency. The successful candidate will have demonstrated experience in planning and directing an agency's programs and maintain a standard of professional practices.

Qualifications: Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, Business Administration or a related field. Six to eight years of senior management/executive experience with a history of progressive, responsible and successful performance of duties in the public or private sector, preferably in a bargaining unit environment. Also experience in managing the fiscal aspects of an organization, agency, program, or operational area and developing and/or implementing policies, programs, laws, rules and/or regulations.

Salary is commensurate with experience. Applications with resume and cover letter will be accepted until the position is filled. This is an unclassified position reporting directly to the Board of Commissioners.

Successful candidates will be subject to Licking County's pre-employment drug screen. A complete job description can be obtained by visiting our website www.lcounty.com or visiting the Human Resources Department. Applications can be

printed from the website at www.lcounty.com or can be picked up at: Licking County Human Resources Department, 20 South Second Street - 3rd. Floor, Newark, OH 43055. EOE.

SENIOR PLANNER

The Knox County Regional Planning Commission is currently accepting applications and resumes for the position of Senior Planner. Under the supervision of the Executive Committee of the Commission, the Senior Planner serves as Secretary to the Commission and is responsible for the following: Providing professional service to the public, leadership in all aspects of planning, administering regulations and managing staff, and working with the Commission's committee and local and other units of government.

This is a full-time position requiring a minimum of a four-year degree from an accredited university or college in planning or a related field; minimum of five years of experience with the varied aspects of planning in a regional/county planning commission or a similar organization; minimum of three years of administrative responsibility for staff; demonstrated professional development through certification by at least one statewide or national organization for planners and through other similar activities; ability to project a high level of professionalism and sensitivity in dealing with the public, developers, governmental officials and members of the Commission; computer experience and aptitude as demonstrated by proficiency with Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Publisher and Access as well as Arc View GIS and other similar tools; and a valid Ohio Driver's License and an acceptable driving record.

Position description and application are available on the County's website www.co.knox.oh.us/jobs or can be obtained by contacting epmarth@ecr.net or at 117 East High Street, Suite 161 in Mount Vernon, OH 43050. Completed applications with attached resumes must be returned to the above address on or before **March 31, 2008**. EOE.