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COUNTY LEADER

County Leader, CCAO’s quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio’s 88 counties.

The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association.

If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Andrew Johnson at ajohnson@ccao.org or 614-220-7986.
A MESSAGE FROM 2019 CCAO PRESIDENT
JULIE EHEMANN, SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER

As I prepared to serve as president of CCAO for 2019, I was asked several times what my initiative would be. I gave it a lot of thought and determined that my focus would be having successful outcomes for the counties’ priorities in the state’s budget bill. After all, without the appropriate funds, our counties cannot provide the basic services with which we are mandated.

Your association in 2018 focused on determining our legislative priorities and we really drilled down into areas that would give Ohio’s counties maximum impact. With the board, executive committee and policy team, it was determined we would focus on indigent defense reimbursement as our one big “ask” in the 2019 state budget.

We met with both gubernatorial candidates prior to the election to lay the groundwork for the needs of our county governments. Both gubernatorial candidates and legislative candidates were briefed with booklets that had been created to explain CCAO’s state-county priorities. We tagged the booklet with STRONGER COUNTIES, STRONGER PARTNERSHIP, STRONGER OHIO.

Once the election had determined Gov. Mike DeWine would be our next governor, we felt confident in moving forward. As an attorney and former attorney general, DeWine was hoped to be understanding and sympathetic to the indigent defense issues. Our strategy of one big “ask” also fit with some legislators having expressed support for this issue in the past. In addition, our request was simply for an additional appropriation of money and did not require any formula revisions, new programs, or infrastructure. Moreover, our request had a Supreme Court decision (Gideon vs Wainwright, 1963) to help bolster our argument that indigent defense is a state responsibility.

Your CCAO staff and I met with our new governor in late January and explained our request to him and our goal of improving the state-county partnership.

When the governor outlined his budget proposal, he showed the counties his strong support by proposing an additional $60 million for indigent defense reimbursement in each year. The dollars proposed were estimated to increase county reimbursement from the current 42 percent to 80 percent. We were very pleased, and wanted to see if we could build on this strong foundation in the House.

As the House began to meet to review the governor’s proposals, I launched the Legislative Priorities Task Force and held bi-weekly phone calls. During these brief Friday morning calls, the task force was given updates from staff regarding our proposal and other county-related initiatives. At the end of each call, CCAO members were given a simple agenda item to complete during the next week usually consisting of personal outreach to a local legislator with a targeted message. It was important for all commissioners, county executives and county council members to make the same request and to repeat the same message.

In addition to the task force, I used every opportunity to testify before the appropriate legislative committee to give more context to our priority of indigent defense reimbursement.

Thanks to the many CCAO members that spoke with legislators during this process, the House increased the governor’s proposal by $35 million in the second year of the budget. Special thanks to Speaker Larry Householder for strengthening the partnership.

As I relayed to the Senate in my testimony, this funding would give counties almost 100 percent reimbursement, assuming current conditions remain unchanged. Indigent defense costs can fluctuate significantly, and CCAO will monitor these costs closely as changing variables may ultimately lower the final reimbursement rate closer to 90 percent.

As a result, the Senate retained the higher funding levels and inserted reporting requirements to help gauge where growth in expenses occurs. Thanks to Senate President Larry Obhof and Chairman Matt Dolan for their work on this.

We are extremely grateful for the strong support of the governor along with both the House and Senate for the increased funding to counties that was included in the budget bill, HB 166.

If you have not already, PLEASE reach out to your legislators and let them know how grateful we are for their commitment. Let them know we value their partnership, and we look forward to continuing our dialogue in the years ahead.

Throughout the process, I have been extremely thankful for the support of CCAO members as well as our Board and Executive Committee along with our Executive Director Suzanne Dulaney and all of the CCAO Policy Team including Cheryl, John, Jon, Adam and Rachel.

Truly our overall collaborative efforts working with our governor and state Legislature can result in STRONGER COUNTIES, a STRONGER PARTNERSHIP and STRONGER OHIO.
LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUZANNE DULANEY

Hello Members! Welcome to the newest CCAO publication. County Leader is our e-magazine that provides CCAO with an opportunity to dive deeper into issues and provide a more in-depth analysis of what is happening in Ohio, to showcase our members, share best practices, and other association news. I want to thank our Communications Coordinator Andrew Johnson for bringing this project forward and to our policy team and enterprise services for their contributions. Perhaps your county has a best practice we should share with your peers in our next issue? Let us know!

It’s hard to believe how far we’ve come with our communications over the past several years - establishing our social media presence, fresh looks to our weekly newsletter and statehouse report, developing CCAO annual reports, our Ohio Counties Matter publication, enhancing our press releases, our Candidate Briefing Guide, County Clips featuring counties in the news and more. What a great team effort promoting and advocating for county government!

Speaking of great team efforts, I want to echo President Ehemann’s comments about our strategy to focus our budget request around indigent defense funding while partnering with others to advance common objectives. It proved to be the right path forward. Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted both commented how our focus on one carefully selected issue helped them to help us.

This year we’ve seen transportation funding, the largest increases in indigent defense funding and child protective funding I’ve ever witnessed, new resources to combat the drug epidemic and new commitments around addressing water quality. Not to mention finally achieving marketplace fairness through implementing internet sales tax.

We have made great strides to strengthen the partnership between counties and the state. I want to thank Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted who have been so accessible and responsive to CCAO. Next, thank you to the General Assembly who stepped up and built upon many of our priorities as the budget moved through the legislative process. My sincerest thanks to our CCAO Board, Executive Committee and President Ehemann, our tireless and talented CCAO Policy Team and last - but certainly not least- you our members.

We know our work continues given the challenges counties face. Together, we will continue to advance effective county government for Ohioans. Stronger Counties, Stronger Partnership, Stronger Ohio!
A few years ago, my family saw the Head of the Charles Regatta, which is a rowing head race held in October on the Charles River, which separates Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is the largest 2-day regatta in the world, with 11,000 athletes rowing in over 1,900 boats in 61 events. For my sister-in-law and husband who are rowers, this was paradise. For me, I was a fish out of water. So I escaped into my phone, surfing the Internet to learn more about rowing and the Regatta.

Watching boat after boat pass, I began to appreciate the qualities of an elite team and what it takes to win. High performance teams achieve success when they have a clear goal that everyone agrees on and works toward. Moreover, each person in the group has to understand how their contributions move everyone forward. And, a lot of hard work is put in long before the race begins.

These crew strategies easily transfer into association world and advocacy. As CCAO’s logo suggests, CCAO is one entity composed of 88 counties. When county commissioners, county executives and county council members come together with one voice to work on an agreed upon goal, counties move faster and closer to the finish line.

The clear vision for CCAO’s legislative priorities for 2019-2020 is to replace lost dollars in the county general fund and remove financial pressure, particularly caused by the opioid epidemic’s impacts in county jails, and delivering child protection services.

This year’s state budget accomplishes CCAO’s goal in various ways. Big items include:

**Indigent Defense.** Provides an additional $155 million over the biennium to reimburse counties.

**Sales Tax Collection from Out-of-State Vendors.** Implements the *South Dakota v. Wayfair* U.S. Supreme Court decision by creating a nexus for out-of-state vendors that lack a presence in Ohio. Annual compliance thresholds are at least $100,000 in sales or 200 transactions. Increases county and transit revenue by an estimated $51 million at full implementation.

**Local Government Fund.** Increases the ratio of state general fund revenues shared with local governments from 1.66 to 1.68 percent. Provides an estimated $10 million gain for local governments over biennium.

**Children Services Funding.** Increases funding to the state child protection allocation by $65 million each year. Provides an additional $25 million for multi-system youth placement costs and to prevent custody relinquishment and makes key investments in kinship care.

In addition, the budget bill provides the following support and tools:

**Additional Sales Tax Authority for Jail Construction.** Authorizes additional voter-approved sales tax authority for jail construction and renovation in certain circumstances.

**County Recorder Fee Increased for County General Fund & State Housing Trust Fund.** Increases the fee to record items from $28 to $34 for the first two pages, and splits the revenue equally between the county general fund and the State Housing Trust Fund.

**Right-Sizing Poll Workers.** Enables a board of elections to reduce the number of poll workers where a polling location has multiple precincts and electronic poll books are utilized.

**MARCS Fee Offset.** Continues to provide 50 percent subsidy for the monthly radio unit user fee charge.
Psychotropic Drug Reimbursement Program for County Jails. Provides $2.5 million each year.

The bill also makes substantial investments in water quality, providing an unprecedented $172 million in funding over the biennium through the newly established H2Ohio Fund.

Soil and water districts’ state-county match rates should go up to a dollar-for-dollar with the $5 million bump from the state.

An additional million dollars was appropriated for OSU Cooperative Extension Service as well as the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center (OARDC) – entities that partner with Ohio’s counties.

Last but not least, the bill reinstates the Agricultural Society Facilities Grant Program to provide approximately $50,000 to each county and independent agricultural societies for capital projects.

Looking forward, discussions and planning will occur over the next two years to prepare for a possible transition for common pleas courts to establish their own probation department. When the budget bill was introduced, 42 counties who were supported by the state’s Adult Parole Authority (APA) would have been required to become autonomous. However, the final version makes the transition permissive for the 23 counties that have probation departments and also utilize APA service. The enacted budget also allows for more future discussions to develop an approach to help the other 13 counties establish probation departments beginning in 2022.

Counties’ success in the state budget was due in part because of our elite team dynamics. Yet, we crossed the finish line strong also because of our excellent partners at the Statehouse. This started at the top with Governor DeWine, Speaker Householder and Senate President Obhof as well as our former CCAO members who are now legislators. Many other lawmakers who actively responded to our members’ requests joined them. Please take the time to thank them for their leadership.

The CCAO team, which includes our invaluable members and our Policy Team, crossed this year’s state budget finish line strong because we all rowed in the same direction and had an improved state-county partnership with our officials at the Statehouse.

We must continue this strategy going forward as we chart our next course in strengthening our counties and our great state.

The CCAO Policy Team is working with counties to host eight regional forums that will include informal discussion of issues counties select to bring to the table as well as a brief overview of the state budget. These will occur in September and October.

A comprehensive overview of how the state budget impacts counties will be published in August. In the meantime, click here to listen to the Policy Team’s webinar on budget highlights.
After being sworn in as governor, one of the first things on our agenda was to propose the 2020-21 Ohio operating budget. As we worked on our budget priorities, we kept in mind our local government partners and their needs. I am proud to say that this budget sets in motion wonderful things for the state of Ohio, many of which benefit local government, such as increased support for children services, indigent defense and the Local Government Fund.

The budget demonstrates our priorities by investing in Ohio’s future, starting with children. As my first action as governor, I named a director of Children’s Initiatives to focus on issues facing young people. To give our kids and moms-to-be the best start in life, the budget invests $70 million in evidence-based home visiting programs over two years.

For children growing up in troubled homes the budget provides $125 million in direct-to-county support for children services agencies, $5 million for foster care and family recruitment and engagement efforts, and $8.5 million to establish a Kinship Navigator Program.

It also expands the Ohio Sobriety, Treatment, Abuse, and Reducing Trauma (OhioSTART) program, which my office started while I was serving as Attorney General, to 30 additional counties and invests $675 million to start the new Student Wellness and Success Fund to provide wraparound services in schools.

To help counties that have been feeling the pinch from covering the cost of criminal defense for those who are indigent, the budget increases state support by $60 million in 2020 and $95 million in 2021. The new funding addresses a pressing need in the criminal justice system and alleviates local budget pressures by making county general funds available for other purposes.

In another plus for counties, the new budget raises the Local Government Fund by $10 million during the biennium through an increase in the funding percentage.

As opioids are taking a toll on our communities, the human and financial costs have increased.

Immediately after taking the oath of office, I signed an executive order creating the RecoveryOhio Advisory Council to advise the administration on critical matters concerning mental illness and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

The council’s initial report included recommendations to better assist those who are struggling to recover and to help them lead productive lives.

We listened and included new funding across several agencies to fight the opioid epidemic.

To provide relief to county budgets, the state is directing $22 million to local Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Boards to ease the financial burden on communities as they provide crisis response efforts.

The state budget also invests $5 million to create at least 30 specialized courts for cases involving defendants with mental health and substance use disorders. The budget will provide $10 million a year to pay for more resources for local task forces to investigate drug traffickers and take deadly drugs off the streets.

Ohio is blessed with many natural wonders, including state parks, wildlife, rivers, and lakes. These God-given gifts make Ohio unique and wonderful, and it is extremely important to preserve the environment for future generations to enjoy.

Our most important resource is water. To ensure safe, clean water across Ohio, we have created the H2Ohio Fund to pay for improvements in water-quality technology, more wetlands in targeted areas, and other long-term solutions to our water challenges.

To improve and expand our parks, the state is investing $25 million for renovations and upgrades.

Of course, not all of the results of our efforts will be immediately evident. In my administration, we don’t take shortcuts, we work hard to solve problems as we look to the future of Ohio.
LEGISLATIVE NEWS

FIX OUR ROADS OHIO COALITION LEADS CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

by Jon Honeck, CCAO Senior Policy Analyst

INTRODUCTION

In April 2019, the 133rd Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill 62, the FY 2020-2021 transportation budget. The bill contains historic funding increases for road construction and public transportation that will benefit Ohio’s economy for years to come. For road construction funding, each county will receive an annual increase of $1.5 million from the motor fuel tax, bringing the annual total from this source to $4 million. The investments made possible by this legislation occurred because of the efforts of a diverse, nonpartisan group of stakeholders that worked for over a year to educate policymakers and the public about the needs of Ohio’s transportation system. The Fix Our Roads Ohio coalition (FOR OHIO), which included CCAO, worked with Gov. Mike DeWine and legislative champions to provide the political support needed to enable lawmakers to take a difficult vote to raise the motor fuel tax at the beginning of a new legislative session.

BACKGROUND: COUNTY ROAD AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION FUNDING SOURCES

County governments are responsible for over 26,000 bridges and nearly 29,000 lane miles of county highways. County funding for roads and bridge construction comes from both state and local sources. In recent years, the largest source of revenue has been the county share of state motor vehicle license registrations. Counties receive about three-fourths of this revenue source, which is collected by the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Different distribution formulas apply for passenger vehicles and commercial trucks. For a standard passenger car renewal, $20 of the total $34.50 is considered the license tax. The revenue is distributed as follows:

- 47 percent to the county of registration;
- 34 percent to the municipality of registration, or to the county if registered in a township;
- 9 percent to all counties based on road mileage;
- 5 percent divided equally among all 88 Ohio counties;
- 5 percent to all townships based on road mileage.

Prior to HB 62, the state motor fuel tax was the second largest source of road and bridge construction funding for counties. This tax is charged on a per gallon basis and is constitutionally restricted to road and bridge design and construction and highway safety purposes. The state sales tax does not apply to motor fuel. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) administers the tax. The distribution formula is complex, but prior to the passage HB 62, local governments and the Public Works Commission received just under 40 percent of the proceeds of the motor fuel tax. Within the allocation for local governments, municipalities receive 42.86 percent, counties 37.14 percent, and townships 20 percent. In the future, due to HB 62’s expected increase of $135 million per year for counties, the motor fuel tax will become the largest single source of road construction funds.

Counties have the option to enact a local permissive license tax. This tax is actually comprised of four separate levies of five dollars per vehicle, each with its own legal authority and different requirements for revenue sharing with other local governments (ORC 4504.02, 4504.15, 4504.16, 4504.24). The fourth levy for counties was added in 2017 as part of the FY 2018-2019 transportation budget bill, and HB 62 added parallel authority for municipalities and townships. The permissive license tax takes on far greater importance for counties with larger populations, which typically have enacted all four levies. As of 2018, 21 counties with smaller populations have not enacted any of the levies because the additional cost to residents will yield little benefit in terms of revenue. The table below shows the amounts collected from these three major funding sources prior to HB 62.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Motor Vehicle License Registration Tax</td>
<td>$250.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Motor Fuel Tax*</td>
<td>$213.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive County Motor Vehicle License Tax</td>
<td>$106.9 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*State and Local Transportation Funding Sources for Counties (2018)

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Early in 2018, CCAO, along with the County Engineers’ Association of Ohio (CEAO) and other local government associations, began meeting informally with stakeholders from the private sector to discuss ways to increase funding for transportation. Coalition meetings were hosted by the Ohio Contractors Association (OCA). The stakeholders agreed that the condition of Ohio’s transportation infrastructure was becoming more critical with each passing year. Ohio had not increased its motor fuel tax since 2005, and construction inflation was eating away at the purchasing power of appropriations. The CEAO estimated that construction inflation had grown by 50 percent from 2003 to 2018. The funding crunch not only prevented most major new construction projects, it also limited maintenance efforts at the state and local levels, leading to increased costs in the future. The gap between needs and available resources grew wider each year.

Despite the uphill political and public relations challenges, the stakeholder group believed that there were some reasons for optimism about changing the conversation around infrastructure. First, the spotlight of the 2018 gubernatorial campaign provided a perfect opportunity for nonpartisan education of the media, the public and the campaigns themselves about the need for improvements to transportation infrastructure. In June 2018, the coalition partnered with TRIP, a national transportation research group, to release a report (“Modernizing Ohio’s Transportation System”) about the challenges facing Ohio’s road and bridge network. The report calculated that bad roads cost Ohioans $12 billion every year in the form of additional vehicle operating costs (VOC), congestion-related delays, and traffic crashes. Press conferences took place in five Ohio cities to publicize the release of the report. Throughout the summer and fall, candidates heard about the importance of infrastructure in private meetings and public forums hosted by coalition members. As the election approached, both major party candidates for governor acknowledged the importance of the issue to Ohio and the need to take action.

Second, the change of administration coincided with a funding cliff for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and no plans had been put forward by policymakers to address it. Resolution of this situation was left to the incoming governor. In 2013, as part of the transportation budget bill, the legislature accepted a Kasich Administration proposal to leverage the borrowing capacity of the Ohio Turnpike to fund major ODOT construction projects in northern Ohio. These projects included the Interstate 90 Innerbelt bridge in Cuyahoga County and widening of Interstate 75 in Hancock and Wood Counties. The plan temporarily boosted revenue for ODOT, but did not provide any additional revenue for local governments. The Turnpike Commission issued $930 million in bonds in FY 14 and an additional $450 million in February 2018. These funds were scheduled to be fully committed by the end of SFY 2019, leaving a major gap in ODOT’s ability to support major new projects. Early in 2018, ODOT’s Transportation Review Advisory Council published estimates showing that ODOT’s annual commitments for major construction projects would be about one-fourth of their current levels by FY 22.

Third, transportation advocates could point to the fact that states across the nation had acted to address their transportation funding needs, and these actions had taken place in states controlled by both parties. Also, it was clear that major new resources would not be forthcoming from the federal government, despite the discussion of infrastructure in the 2016 Presidential campaign. By the end of 2017, all of the states surrounding Ohio had acted in some fashion to adjust their motor fuel tax rates. Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania and West Virginia had higher rates than Ohio’s 28 cents per gallon. Around the nation, motor fuel tax rate increases were often indexed to inflation and accompanied by changes in vehicle registration fees, including the
addition of specialized fees for electric vehicles and hybrids. Clearly, Ohio policymakers and advocates could draw on examples of successful campaigns to change transportation funding policies.

Over the course of 2018, the coalition’s purpose was expanded to include public transit, and the group added the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA) to its membership. The coalition platform called for an increase in public transit funding, without specifying where it would come from. The ability to find common ground proved to be critical for the coalition’s legislative efforts, especially in the House of Representatives, where many of the members from urban areas were able to support the bill because of its investments in public transit.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

True to his campaign promise, DeWine established a temporary advisory committee to explore the state’s transportation funding options. The Governor’s Advisory Committee on Transportation Infrastructure met several times in February in Columbus to hear testimony from ODOT, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and members of the coalition, which adopted the name Fix Our Roads Ohio (FOR Ohio). ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks described a $1 billion annual revenue shortfall, and the County Engineers Association described a $670 million annual funding gap for counties.

In general, members of the FOR Ohio coalition made a strong case for an increase in the motor fuel tax with inflation indexing to help resources keep pace with needs in the future. In its final report, the committee endorsed the concept of an increase in the motor fuel tax, and certain members expressed interest in exploring an inflation index.

HOUSE BILL 62: THE FY 2020-2021 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

When the FY 2020-2021 transportation budget was introduced in the House on Feb. 12, the administration proposed an 18 cent per gallon increase in the motor fuel tax effective July 1, 2019, with inflation indexing. This would have raised an additional $1.2 billion new revenue each year. After deliberations, the House modified the administration’s proposal to include increases of 10.7 cents per gallon for gasoline, phased-in over two years, and 20 cents per gallon for diesel, phased-in over three years. When fully implemented, the House version would have raised about $845 million in new revenue (about one-third less than the executive proposal). Importantly for local governments, the House shifted the distribution of the funding that would result from the rate increase by lifting the local government share to 45 percent. House members could not reach consensus around the issue of inflation indexing and dropped the concept from the bill. Registration fees were added for electric vehicles and hybrids and $100 million earmarked for public transit funding from “flexed” federal highway funds.

Throughout the legislative process, CCAO members and other local government officials came to Columbus to testify and contacted their legislators to urge the General Assembly to follow the governor’s lead. CCAO President and Shelby County Commissioner Julie Ehemann and Union County Commissioner Steve Stolte testified in the House, and Cory Noonan, Allen County commissioner and CCAO Jobs, Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee chair, testified in the Senate. Private sector associations were also very active and supported the FOR Ohio message to increase the motor fuel tax. For example, the regional chambers of six metropolitan areas (Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo) delivered joint testimony to the Senate Transportation Committee supporting the administration plan.

The Senate’s version of the bill increased the motor fuel tax by six cents per gallon, effective on July 1, 2019. This would have raised about $400 million per year, a reduction of over three-fourths from the governor’s proposal. Public transit received $55 million from the general revenue fund. The wide gap between the proposals from the two chambers, as well as differences in other policy areas (such as scrapping Ohio’s requirement for two vehicle license plates) led to a more contentious conference committee process than usual. The transportation budget was passed on April 2, a few days after the traditional March 30 deadline.
The final compromise included a 10.5 cents per gallon increase for gasoline and 19 cents per gallon increase for diesel, effective July 1, 2019. This is expected to yield an additional $865 million in total new annual revenue. Local governments will receive approximately 45 percent of the new revenue, although the existing 60 – 40 percent split remains on the first 28 cents. Electric vehicles will pay an additional annual registration fee of $200 starting January 1, 2020. Hybrids will pay a $100 fee.

For public transit, the compromise appropriation was $70 million per year, but from GRF revenue. This enabled ODOT to keep a greater share of federal highway dollars for construction. ODOT will establish a competitive application process for local transit authorities to access the new transit funding. For more information about the details of HB 62, please refer to County Advisory Bulletin 2019-04. The table below shows HB 62’s expected impact on motor fuel tax distribution in FY 20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Subdivision</th>
<th>Base Funding (in millions $)</th>
<th>HB 62 Increase (in millions $)</th>
<th>Total (in millions $)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counties</td>
<td>214.5</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>349.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>249.2</td>
<td>155.9</td>
<td>405.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>208.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future Issues: The Road Ahead

In the short-term, policymakers believed that there was no alternative to the motor fuel tax that could raise significant amounts of revenue to repair Ohio’s road infrastructure. The vehicle miles tax (VMT) approach is still in its infancy, with important concerns to be worked out such as consumer privacy and how to account for differences in vehicle weight. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the motor fuel tax will become less practical over the coming decades as electric vehicles take a larger market share. Consequently, legislators insisted on the inclusion of special registration fees for electric vehicles in HB 62 despite their limited revenue impact in the short-term. There will be continued discussions about the correct levels for the new fees, but the principle that electric cars must pay something toward road construction has been firmly established by HB 62.

Recognizing the long-term uncertainty caused by changing technology, HB 62 included the Road to Ohio’s Future Study Commission to consider alternatives to the motor fuel tax. The commission is also charged with a large number of other items to study, including an analysis of ODOT’s future needs and how the department is making use of evolving technology and leveraging state assets. Unfortunately, the lack of inflation indexing for the motor fuel tax rate may cause Ohio to face another transportation funding shortfall sooner than expected.

One of the surprising changes in HB 62 is its increased from General Revenue Fund appropriations. HB 62 appropriates $105 million from the GRF each fiscal year. The previous transportation budget did not use any GRF. One of the issues that came to light in the budget process was that the State Highway Patrol can no longer be supported at its current force level by license registration fees, moving violation fines, and other non-GRF sources. HB 62 provides $35 million GRF per year to make up the difference, and creates a study committee to address the issue. Prior to 2003, the Highway Patrol was funded by motor fuel tax revenue. Since then, the “Highway Patrol Draw” of $170 million per year from the fuel tax has been redirected to local governments. In the future, legislators may have to make a difficult choice between raising fees, redirecting the motor fuel tax, or adding more GRF to sustain the patrol at its current level.

HB 62 would not have been possible without the strong leadership of DeWine, legislative champions and forceful advocacy from a diverse group of public and private stakeholders. Stakeholders defined an urgent need that affected all corners of the state and convinced legislators that a failure to act would harm the state’s economy.

CCAO is grateful to its partners in the FOR Ohio coalition for their support of this issue. With federal action on infrastructure unlikely in the near future, it appears that leadership in this area will be left to states and local governments. The need for a dynamic grassroots effort will continue.
It’s been said time and again, and it remains true – agriculture is the backbone of Ohio’s economy. As an industry, it creates jobs, spurs economic development, feeds our families, and instills pride in communities across the Buckeye State. Now that we’re in the midst of county fair season, I’m sure many of you are spending some extra time with the farmers in your areas and enjoying all that Ohio’s rich agricultural history has to offer.

But undoubtedly and unfortunately, you’ve also seen the serious toll the recent extreme weather has taken on farmlands across Ohio this year. In too many counties, the rain has been so constant, and the fields so flooded, that many Ohio acres are going unplanted. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has tracked planting progress since the 1970s, and few years have proven as challenging as this one.

Because of the difficult situation Ohio’s farmers and agribusinesses are faced with this year, we’ve decided to re-open the application period for the Ag-LINK program.

The Treasurer’s office administers the Ag-LINK program to help Ohio farm operators and other agricultural businesses finance the up-front operating costs for feed, seed, fertilizer, fuel, and other flood related costs. Ag-LINK provides an interest rate reduction on agriculture business operation loans at eligible banks and farm credit lenders.

Through this round of applications, farm operators and agribusiness owners based in Ohio can receive a 2 percent interest rate reduction on loans up to $150,000.

The Ag-LINK application period is currently open and will run through November 15. Farm operators and agribusinesses who previously received loans through Ag-LINK earlier this year may be eligible during this application period if they did not request the $150,000 program limit. Ultimately, our goal is to provide significant savings and much needed relief to farmers and agribusinesses impacted by the season’s extreme weather.

As you talk to constituents in your counties, we hope you’ll share this information with them. Those interested in Ag-LINK should contact a participating bank or Farm Credit Service lender to begin the loan application process. More information on the Ag-LINK program, including a list of current participating financial institutions, may be found on our website (http://www.tos.ohio.gov/Ag-LINK-Extreme-Weather-Relief). To speak with someone directly, please give us a call at 614-466-6546.

We’re committed to partnering with the County Commissioners Association of Ohio to provide you with important updates and support. In the meantime, please follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at @OhioTreasurer for the latest news and information. Also, please do not hesitate to reach out to the regional liaison in your area for any questions or concerns you may have.

As your Treasurer, I’m working for you. My door is always open and I’m always looking for new ideas and ways to connect. Thank you again for the work you do on behalf of Ohioans.
I knew most of the people in the county. When I got elected, Tim Price and I came in at the same time. Our third commissioner, John Piles, had been here two years. We leaned on him a lot during our learning. It takes about one term in office to learn what a commissioner does and know what is right.

**Are there common misconceptions about your job?**
You get a lot of people saying, “Commissioners should do this or should do that.” It’s just not in our ability by law to do this. We don’t have legislative authority.

**One of the primary responsibilities of a commissioner is to develop a balanced budget and provide adequate resources to deliver county services. What has been one of the biggest challenges in that area?**
We are not as bad as we were 10 years ago, simply because of the oil and gas activity in the county. It has helped a lot with our sales tax receipts.

But it’s a two-edged sword. Our emergency services are overworked because of the oil and gas activity. Our sheriff’s department is quite a bit busier than it used to be. There are more vehicle accidents and big truck rollovers. Our EMA director always responds if there is a truck rollover or any kind of spill.

**Why did you want to be a commissioner?**
I was involved with the union when I worked at the aluminum plant. A lot of what a person was doing with the union was helping people and trying to solve problems and looking for answers.

I think that prepared me for political work. I looked at the commissioner position and thought I could do a good job. I thought I could help Monroe County.

**What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?**
I went into it not knowing what all a commissioner could do. I soon found out it’s pretty specific in the Ohio Revised Code what you can do. You can only do what is allowed by Code.
What are you most proud of achieving in your time as commissioner?
Number 1 would be our new county jail. Our old jail was built back in the 1800s. It had gotten to the point where it was not feasible to do the upgrades that needed done to house prisoners. The jail was over $15 million. It’s a 114-bed facility. Everything is under one roof: the sheriff, the administrative offices, the 911 dispatch center. We are housing out-of-county prisoners now. We are expecting to operate and make payments outside of the general fund and the receipts for outside housing.

What has been the biggest challenge you’ve dealt with as a county commissioner?
Our biggest challenges have been budgetary, mostly during the early years. I came in 2008 when we had the nationwide downturn. For the first three or four years I was a commissioner, we’d have to borrow money from the local bank to make payroll until the first property tax settlement.

Why is it important to be involved with CCAO?
It’s always been the perception that southeastern Ohio is forgotten at the Ohio Statehouse. When I first ran to be on the board, I think it was to expose Monroe County to the larger state.

I think getting involved with CCAO was an eye-opener. I really didn’t know what CCAO does. We have used CORSA as our property insurance prior to me being commissioner. We’ve used the helpline, and we called when we needed help from CCAO. Now when we call, we know the person we are talking to. We have developed relationships.

A lot of times you gain more after the [CCAO board] meeting talking with staff or with other commissioners than maybe you gained during the meeting.

What has your county been doing to enhance the state-county partnership?
The best advice is to stay in contact with your legislators. We’ve always worked closely with our legislators. I’m not necessarily in contact with them every week. But if we see something that we feel they have done right, we let them know. If we see that we need something, we let them know.

Main priorities/personal issues/cause? Why?
Just to see the county prosper with the oil and gas that we have been blessed with. I want to see future development, more industry.

What do you find are the most successful methods for reaching out to the residents of your county to communicate what your office is doing and why it’s doing it?
You have to build confidence with them. When you talk to them, be truthful. Explain it in a way they will understand. The confidence that you are telling them the truth is probably No. 1.

When I was running the first time, you get a lot of people asking what are you going to do, what kind of promises are you going to make? The only promise I’m going to make is I will be truthful with you.

Monroe County is located on the eastern border of Ohio, across the Ohio River from West Virginia.

Named after President James Monroe, the county was formed on Jan. 28, 1813 from portions of Belmont, Guernsey and Washington counties.
LEGISLATOR Q & A

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE LARRY HOUSEHOLDER

What is your proudest accomplishment so far this session?
I think we have a lot to be proud of so far this session in the Ohio House. Let me share with you a few legislative highlights and my vision for what we’re trying to accomplish and why I believe it’s important.

Most recently, we’ve passed a new state budget and a major energy bill.

The new state budget cuts personal income tax rates 4 percent while providing record funding for schools and advancing some pretty significant health care reforms as well as making a major investment in foster care, which is very important. And we increased funding for local governments in the budget as well. Our energy bill, House Bill 6, will save Ohio’s electric ratepayers $1.3 billion, preserve Ohio jobs and protect Ohio’s environment.

And Ohio’s new transportation budget we passed earlier this year, as our county commissioners and engineers know, is a huge help to our counties. That’s long overdue and I think it’s going to have a really positive impact.

So I’m proud of the work we’ve done legislatively. But I’m also proud of the way in which we’ve done it as well. Let me explain.

It’s easy to look for what divides us as a state, and certainly as a state legislature. But I believe we need to look at things in a different way. There’s a lot more that brings us together than divides us. My job as speaker of the Ohio House is to find ways we can build bridges and find common ground so we can solve problems. This isn’t Washington, D.C. This is Ohio. The people of Ohio expect us to roll up our sleeves and get things done.

What we’re trying to do in the Ohio House is rebuild families and communities. But we can’t change Ohio if we don’t change the way we do business at the Ohio Statehouse.

Thirteen of our first 14 priority bills in the Ohio House this session have been jointly sponsored by a Republican and a Democrat. That’s historic. It’s unfortunate that it’s news when Republicans and Democrats work together to solve problems, but that’s what we’re trying to do. We have done bipartisan press conferences announcing them, we have had bipartisan committee testimony in support of them, and so far, 10 of them have passed the House – with strong bipartisan support.

Are we going to disagree at times, whether it’s along party lines or geographic or philosophical lines? Yes. But we can disagree without being disagreeable.

As county commissioners, your members know this. You have to work with one another. When it’s just you and two other people, you learn pretty quickly you have to work together to get things done. And if you’re not getting things done, your constituents – whether you’re at the grocery store, the county fair or a local school event – they’ll let you know about it.

I have found that the Ohio Statehouse has a lot more in common with the county courthouse than it does with Washington, D.C., and frankly, that’s a good thing.
How do you view the role of counties in delivering services to Ohioans?
I am a former county commissioner, and many of our members come from a local government background as well. I believe strongly in the role counties and all of our partners in local governments play in delivering services. So this is an important partnership we have with our counties.

Let’s talk about foster care for a moment.

As our county leaders know, Ohio’s foster care system has been stretched to the limit by the addiction crisis. We’ve done a lot as a state to help those suffering from addiction, and we’re continuing that work. But in addition to that, those of us in the Ohio House really wanted to do more to help those impacted by the addiction crisis, in particular children.

At any given time, we have nearly 16,000 kids in foster care in Ohio, a figure that has grown by 25 percent in recent years due to the addiction crisis. As your readers know, we have some truly amazing people on the front lines in our counties doing incredible work to help these kids. So in the House, we made a major investment in foster care in the budget, as well as doing more to support kinship caregivers, such as grandparents caring for grandchildren.

This is absolutely the right thing to do and it’s a good example of how we can partner to make a real difference in our communities.

What advice do you have for commissioners when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?
Work closely with your local representatives. That local feedback is important and something the members take seriously. The County Commissioners Association of Ohio also does a very good job of advancing county-specific issues and they are a respected voice at the Statehouse.

What’s something you love about your home county?
My list is a mile long. But I’d sum it up this way: Family, friends, community. It’s home. It’s where I grew up, like my father before me and his father before him. It’s where my wife Taundra and I raised our family. It’s where my five sons live, and where my son Matthew and his wife Jamie are raising their daughter, Scarlett, who celebrated her first birthday earlier this year – and enjoyed her second Perry County Fair just last week.
LEGISLATOR Q & A
SENATE PRESIDENT LARRY OBHOF

What is your proudest accomplishment so far this session?
I am very proud of the way that Senate members have worked together to tackle the challenges facing Ohio. For example, we passed a strong budget bill unanimously. Minority Leader Yuko and I have always prioritized open, respectful communications between our two caucuses, and on major priorities, from the state budget to criminal justice reforms, we have shown that the legislative process is working and every Ohioan is being heard.

I am also proud of our efforts to reduce regulatory and tax burdens on Ohio’s families and job creators, ensuring that government at all levels is working as efficiently and effectively as possible for the people we collectively represent.

How do you view the role of counties in delivering services to Ohioans?
Counties are critical partners to state government in delivering essential services to Ohioans. We share in each other’s challenges, and we share in each other’s success. That is why it was important to the Senate to reimburse counties for indigent defense costs and increase funding for children’s services and public safety communications (MARCS) in the recently enacted budget.

What advice do you have for commissioners when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?
I am a strong believer in open, regular communications between county commissioners and their legislative representatives. I rely on the feedback I receive from my commissioners in Medina, Richland, Ashland and Holmes counties on how services can best be delivered, as well as innovative ideas to improve outcomes. I think each of my colleagues would agree with me that some of the best ideas for legislation come from these conversations with our local officials and our constituents.

What’s something you love about your home county?
There are far too many things to mention here, because I really do believe that my area is home to some of the best small and medium-sized cities in America. There is nowhere in the world I would rather be than the historic Medina Square. On a countywide basis, I love our parks system. My wife Nicole and I try to take our daughters to every park in Medina County at least once each year.
**LEGISLATOR Q & A**

**SENATE MINORITY LEADER KENNY YUKO**

What is your proudest accomplishment so far this session?

My proudest accomplishment has been passing the bipartisan transportation and operating budgets. I was pleased to see both sides come together to tackle the issues facing our state, from road maintenance and public transportation to early childhood education and kinship care.

With $70 million per year for public transportation, more funding for road and bridge repairs, and an increase in the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit for low- and moderate-income Ohioans, the transportation budget makes a direct impact on our local communities.

The $69 billion operating budget is the first in a decade to focus on Ohio’s children, families and our future. I was especially glad to see additional investments in the Local Government Fund and for indigent defense.

How do you view the role of counties in delivering services to Ohioans?

Counties are instrumental in delivering the vital services that impact the quality of life and well-being of all Ohioans. I see counties as an extension of state government, helping us to connect with constituents by directly interacting with Ohioans in their daily lives. Strengthening the county-state relationship is crucial for supporting local governments’ services and programs, promoting public health and safety and guaranteeing economic success throughout our state.

What advice do you have for commissioners when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?

We share the same goals and work for the same people. If we work together, we can accomplish our goals and ensure this state is a great place to live. Commissioners and legislators should develop a strong partnership with open collaboration and communication. When commissioners regularly interact with members of the General Assembly, and vice versa, we are able to develop policies that strengthen and better serve our communities.

What’s something you love about your home county?

The diversity of the people, the rich history of the communities and my own family roots make me proud to call Cuyahoga County home. There’s always something big happening here. Every weekend, downtown Cleveland is full with people attending different conferences and conventions. We just hosted the MLB All-Star Game, we’ll soon host the NFL draft and there’s always something happening at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

There’s a reason for this exciting time – the collaborative relationship between all levels of government and our private-public partnerships. And, of course, I have to mention Lake Erie. To me, the lake is not only a state treasure, but also important for the health of our citizens and businesses in the state.
LEGISLATOR Q & A
HOUSE MINORITY LEADER EMILIA STRONG SYKES

What is your proudest accomplishment so far this session?
I am proud that our caucus has been instrumental in introducing the bipartisan priority legislation for this general assembly that seeks to put Ohio families first.

How do you view the role of counties in delivering services to Ohioans?
Local governments are the backbones of our communities, and as a state elected official I want to ensure Ohio’s counties and municipalities have access to the proper resources they need to deliver top tier constituent services.

What advice do you have for commissioners when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?
We are happy to meet and chat with other elected officials from across the state. If you have any questions, pressing issues or simply want to talk about what matters most to you and your community, please don’t hesitate to reach out to my office via phone or email. Important contact information can be found at www.ohiohouse.gov.

What’s something you love about your home county?
Even though Summit County is one of the largest counties in the state, I still feel a strong sense of togetherness every time I’m in my district. I grew up in a community where I learned the value of hard work, and how individual hard work could benefit an entire community.

Summit County leaders met with their legislators to discuss full funding for indigent defense, transportation funding and other important county issues.

Pictured: John Schmidt, Summit County council member; Clair Dickinson, Summit County council member, Bethany McKenney, Summit County council member; House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes; Rep. Tavia Galonski; Rep. Bill Roemer; Liz Walters, Summit County council member; Council President Jeff Wilhite; and Paula Prentice, Summit County council member and CCAO board member
Once every decade, America comes together to count every resident in the United States. The decennial census has been conducted since 1790, and constitutionally mandates the count of our population and households. The next census occurs in April 2020.

The census is the basis for redistricting and reapportioning the number of representatives in U.S. Congress. The population count helps decide where new schools and hospitals are needed and where to add public safety resources. It determines how the federal government will distribute more than $675 billion dollars to state and local communities. Businesses use the census data to decide where to build factories, offices and stores, while real estate developers and city planners use the information to plan homes and improve neighborhoods.

Counting an increasingly diverse and growing population is a massive undertaking; this will be the most difficult count, perhaps in the history of the census. The success of this census depends on everyone’s participation. Although the 2020 Census may seem far off, the census awareness campaign should start as early as possible.

So, what is the big deal for Ohio’s part in the census?

In April 2019, Gov. Mike DeWine made an executive order that established The Ohio Complete Count Commission to help lead the effort for the state to raise awareness and encourage all people living in Ohio to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census. The commission, along with the U.S. Census Bureau and local Complete Count Committees, will conduct comprehensive census outreach, educational and promotional campaigns. They will create a census information network between state agencies and regional and location organizations to implement strategies to reach hard-to-count populations and areas.

Complete Count Committees (CCC) are volunteer committees that serve as “census ambassadors” and can be established by tribal, state and local governments so that they can better motivate their public to respond to the census. Since they know their communities best, they are a vital part in ensuring an accurate and complete count of their community. The immediate formation of a CCC helps ensure that local households are informed about the census, which leads to increased willingness to take part. For the 2010 Census, Ohio had 188 Complete Count Committees across 88 counties.

The Ohio Development Services Agency (Development) plans to create a platform to share best practices from communities engaging with their partners and stakeholders. Development will also make a toolkit that will contain practical resources for local communities to help explain why an accurate count is valuable to you and your community and why it is everyone’s responsibility to get the count right for Ohio. Check out census.ohio.gov to see more information.

The census is easy, it’s safe, it’s important. Let’s get the population count right. Be Counted. Census 2020.
CORSA NEWS

CORSA 2019-2020 PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

by John Brownlee, CORSA Managing Director

It has been an exciting start to the 2019-2020 year for the CORSA program. Through prudent financial management and focused member insight, we have been able to develop new program enhancements to a program already best in class.

CORSA continues to provide its 66 members and 39 affiliates stable and sustainable resource of protection against a wide spectrum of risks. This year we are adding services in response to the ever-changing needs of our members. Some of the new services include:

Schedule 1 and 2 Substance Controlled Under Federal Law Cleanup, Removal & Disposal

CORSA will pay the reasonable and necessary cost for the cleanup, removal and disposal of schedule 1 and/or schedule 2 substances (such as fentanyl) which are controlled under federal law from the member’s covered premises or from the member’s automobiles due to the release, seepage, migration, discharge or dispersal of said controlled substance.

This added coverage will pay for testing which is performed in the course of extracting the schedule 1 and/or schedule 2 substances from the property to which this coverage applies. The most CORSA will pay is $35,000 for the sum of all covered expenses arising out of any and all losses occurring during each separate coverage period.

Land Banks – Two Options

1. Coverage provided on separate policy
   $1,000,000 liability limit
   $2,500 deductible
   $5,000 minimum premium

2. Coverage provided by County policy
   County liability limit
   County deductible
   No minimum premium

Drones

- Liability limit will match the member’s limit
- Deductibles will match the member’s deductibles
- No premium charge for liability
- Physical damage added under equipment schedules
- **Still need to report any drone to CORSA as liability is pilot and use specific.

We will continue to be Ohio counties’ program of choice for property and liability protection.

CORSA Vision Statement

To be the leader in providing Ohio counties with exceptional value, service and protection of assets.

CORSA Mission Statement

CORSA’s mission is to provide members with comprehensive property and liability coverage and high quality risk management services at a stable and competitive cost.
CEBCO is CCAO’s member-owned, not-for-profit, self-insured purchasing pool that offers members stable and competitive costs, financial strength, broad coverage, and a vast array of wellness and health management services that are unlike any other risk sharing pool or insurance company option available to Ohio counties.

We currently serve 35 of the 88 counties with group purchasing and superior programs in health insurance and wellness advocacy.

The CEBCO board and staff believe wellness is the key to mitigating future healthcare expenses. We have seen life changing behaviors and even lives saved due to this program, and it’s for this reason we have two full-time wellness coordinators who devote their days to the wellness of our members.

Since starting this program we have received dozens of success stories from members in different counties who have taken advantage of this wellness program. Many of them include weight loss through our Diabetes Prevention Program, pre-existing conditions the member was not aware of, and quitting tobacco products through our Tobacco Cessation Program.

To give you a sense of the impact, one member stated after her husband’s colonoscopy that found 14 precancerous polyps, “I am very thankful that CEBCO allows county employees the opportunity to participate in a wellness program. The monetary benefit was the motivation for us to participate, and because of that, it has added years to – if not saved my husband’s life!” In another county, we had an individual who smoked a pack of cigarettes every day for 44 years, and after 90 days doing our tobacco cessation program, he’s smoke free.

We partner with Interactive Health to administer a wellness program that both employees and spouses enrolled on our medical plan may engage in year-round. Each member county is required to offer this program to eligible members; however, completion of the program is optional at the individual level. Members may access and participate in the program online via a secure personalized portal. Activities available include a health evaluation (comprehensive health screening), preventive care, health challenges, online workshops and local activities such as education sessions and walk/run events. The portal offers a number of health and fitness trackers to address important health behaviors such as sleep, activity, mood, fruit and vegetable intake, and body weight.

The program activities are weighted for points/credit upon completion and members must earn a specified number of points in order to receive any existing monetary incentive. Incentives vary by county/employer. The 2019 CEBCO Wellness Program is available now and will end on August 15, 2019.

To learn more about how CEBCO Wellness can positively impact your employees and your claims, contact CEBCO Managing Director Doug Foust at (614) 220-7984 or dfoust@ccao.org
CCAOSC OFFERS TASC MEDICAL SAVINGS PLAN
by Keith Blosser, CCAO Managing Director of Operations

It's August 2019, and CCAO is excited to bring to all Ohio counties another new Service Corporation program that will save your county money and further enhance your employee benefit package.

This new benefit will keep your employees happy, and help retain them in this competitive job market. CCAOSC, the Service Corporation of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, has a new discount program for Ohio counties and their employees with the Total Administrative Services Corporation (TASC). This is a Section 125 plan FSA for health care medical savings and other items too.

You say you already offer a plan? You say you already have this benefit? Well, not like this you don’t.

With health care costs for counties and employee’s alike rising and all budgets strained, we have a solution that more than pays for itself. Counties save money on employee costs while offering employees an incredible benefit that saves money for them and makes it easy to go for medical services and other items.

SO WHAT DO YOU GET WITH THIS PROGRAM?

• Employees get a host of options to pre-tax their pay for medical, dental, vision, parking and transportation. Counties can choose other items as well, such as dependent care for daycare situations.

• All counties and county employees get CCAO Service Corp/TASC cards so it is easy to use.

• The employee saves Fed, State & Medicare tax on every paycheck dollar pre-tax they set aside.

• The county saves 1.45 percent on every employee dollar pre-taxed on the Medicare match.

• Counties save more on taxes than they pay in fees for participants.

• Easy on-line or paper sign-up.

The Extra CEBCO County Benefit:

If you have CEBCO in your county for employee health care, your employees will get an added benefit at no cost. “Crossover” or auto-claims payment will be built in for you. It’s a weekly data feed from Anthem (the CEBCO carrier) on employee claims data that auto matches with your employee’s TASC card activity for auto payout of deductibles. Call your TASC rep Nick Kuchenbecker at 800-422-4661 ext-8866 and ask for the CCAO County program rate and added benefit.

We are very proud to be able to offer this benefit. I encourage a look, even if you have a program.
In an instant in the middle of the night on a holiday weekend a county may face a crisis. Deputy involved shooting, cyberattack, alleged sexual misconduct, alleged elected official criminal conduct, devastating fire or natural disaster, are but a few crises that can happen at any moment. These events and circumstances surrounding them are often broadcast in real time by livestream video and social media. The press, family members, employees, and public at large demand information and comments from county officials in real time as well.

Repeatedly saying “no comment” or spewing canned jargon is insufficient. Ineffective or ill prepared crisis communication amplifies safety risks, legal exposure, and loss of public trust. Broadly, a crisis communication plan should accomplish the following:

1. Identify individuals(s) and contact information of those who will communicate on behalf of a county during crisis;

2. Outline roles and responsibilities of communicators and non-communicators;

3. Pre-draft crisis communication messages. For example, a county home should be prepared to quickly communicate in response to an allegation of resident abuse. A county should be ready to make a comment upon receipt of such an allegation to reflect that it takes the allegation seriously and is committed to resident safety. The county may make an immediate statement to the effect of: “The safety of county home residents is our highest priority. We look forward to an independent investigation of this matter and if any practices or policies need to be changed to better ensure resident safety we will work to make those changes in an expedited manner.”

4. Identify crisis communication recipients in priority order and general message content to be disseminated (e.g. law enforcement, media, regulatory agencies, risk pools/insurers, individuals, and industry groups);

5. Have your prosecutor or legal counsel approve the crisis communication plan, templates, forms, and, most importantly, pre-approve communications during a crisis; and

6. Train staff on the crisis communication plan and conduct communicator simulations on a routine basis, but no less frequent than annually.

Is your county prepared to speak to the public during a crisis? Now is the time to create, revise, review and train on a crisis communication plan as part of your county’s risk and crisis management program.

Training and simulations are critical because you can have the best plan in the world, but if not executed well the plan provides no benefit during a crisis.

As Mike Tyson famously said, “Everyone has a plan, until they get punched in the mouth.” Effective communication in response to, during, and after crisis allows a county to survive a punch (aka crisis), adapt, and manage a crisis in a manner that serves the best interests of all stakeholders and mitigates risk and exposure.
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