

COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio quarterly magazine

Winter 2021



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Cover) CCAO Executive Director Dean Ringle, 2021 CCAO President Frederick Wachtel, 2021 CCAO President Tim Bubb, CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler and state Sen. Jay Hottinger

1) Scioto County Commissioners Cathy Coleman and Bryan Davis welcome Scottie Powell to the team.

2) Erie County Commissioner Matt Old is sworn into office.

A MESSAGE FROM 2021 CCAO PRESIDENT TIM BUBB, LICKING COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Beginning 2021 it is critical, both as county leaders and as an association, to view the year ahead as 'a glass half full and not half empty.' We need to view the diminishment of the pandemic health crisis, the economic recovery and our many other challenges as opportunities to make Ohio's counties and the state stronger. The people of Ohio need our strong leadership, at the county level, now more than ever before!

The first half of 2021 is the budget development season for Governor DeWine's administration, and then the legislature. They certainly know of our concerns and priorities, but in the weeks ahead they will need to hear not just from our association leadership and policy team, but from strong and articulate voices in all 88 counties. We will certainly lay out our priorities as detailed in our platform, however in this challenging time our State partners need to know we are 'one team' together working for the betterment of Ohio. As the process plays out in the weeks ahead we will be communicating with all of you, and asking you to amplify the voice of CCAO statewide!



Under the able leadership of Fairfield County Commissioner Jeff Fix, a select group of members of have begun a Strategic Planning Process. Starting Feb. 3, with an initial kick-off session in Columbus, a group of commissioners and council members, led by our consultant Roy Getz, will be meeting to think about where we are as an association and where we want to be in 2025 and beyond. The Strategic Planning group includes Chair Jeff Fix, Fairfield County Commissioner; Tony Anderson, Fayette County Commissioner; Kathryn Whittington, Ashtabula County Commissioner; Tony Vero, Richland County Commissioner; Lenny Eliason, Athens County Commissioner, John O'Grady, Franklin County Commissioner; Debbie Lieberman, Montgomery County Commissioner; Armond Budish, Cuyahoga County Executive; and Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner. I appreciate their willingness to spend time this year working to outline a long term vision for the growth and improvement of our association.

Finally, let me share my thoughts for in 2021 regarding 'virtual' versus 'in-person' meetings. As you all know in the recent By-Laws update we endorsed the use by our committees, Executive Committee, CCAO board and CCAO membership of virtual or remote meetings, using electronic means, as needed. It is likely the need will remain well into this year as we navigate a year of mass vaccinations and pandemic recovery.

So, until a majority of our members are vaccine protected and feel comfortable meeting 'in person', the virtual option will be used in most cases. The CCAO board meetings for the first half of 2021 will be 'virtual'. However, my hope is by August we can transition back to 'in person' meetings. I certainly hope by year-end we can return to an in-person Winter Conference. The safety of our members and staff is most important; however we all recognize the limitations of virtual meetings and look forward to the day when we can get back to the relationship building that comes with meeting face to face.

Best wishes in each of your counties as we meet the challenges of early 2021, and certainly reach out to me or the excellent CCAO staff with any questions, concerns or suggestions.

LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

DeWine-Husted Administration Strongly Supports Counties' Request for Indigent Defense Funds

For SFY 2022-2023, the Governor and Lt. Governor's budget proposal provides funding that could result in an estimated 96 percent reimbursement and a 94 percent reimbursement rate in each year of the biennium, respectively.



In the midst of combating a global pandemic and while simultaneously investing in our state's future, the Governor and Lt. Governor have been able to strongly support counties' request for indigent defense reimbursement. CCAO is extremely pleased and grateful for their steadfast commitment to county government.

CCAO commends and expresses its gratitude to the DeWine-Husted Administration for its continued support of county government through the strong investments in indigent defense reimbursement included in their biennial budget proposal.

During the last several years, county commissioners, county executives and county council members spoke clearly about the need for the state to fully fund indigent defense reimbursement, particularly given the prior loss of Managed Care Organization sales tax revenue and reduced Local Government Funds.

Moreover, providing counsel to individuals who cannot afford an attorney in certain circumstances is a constitutional requirement of the state, as determined by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted heard this plea from county officials and others two years ago and again this year as they developed their

state Executive Budget proposal.

During the DeWine-Husted Administration's first year in office, they proposed a historic increase of \$120 million over the SFY 2020-2021 budget in reimbursement funding. The General Assembly appropriated that amount plus an additional \$35 million in the second year of the biennium. That was simply amazing! With these funds, indigent defense reimbursement rates rose to 75 percent in SFY 2020 and were projected at approximately 90 percent in SFY 2021.

However, the COVID pandemic caused some state funds to be frozen and then cut for SFY 2021. As a result, the indigent defense reimbursement rate was lowered to approximately 75 percent for the year. We are extremely pleased and grateful that the administration's budget as introduced restores reimbursement funding to the level appropriated for SFY 2021 and serves a strong foundation upon which we can move forward toward achieving full reimbursement for indigent defense.

As the state budget process gets underway, your advocacy is critically important because our members are our best advocates. Your efforts will be what helps to carry the day for county government and our mission to obtain full reimbursement for indigent defense.

In the months to come, the CCAO policy team and our members will work with the legislature to seek additional funding to hit the benchmark of 100 percent reimbursement. We have made great progress thus far, but it will still require all county commissioners, county executives and county council members advocating together to achieve this and other key policy goals.

CCAO COMMENDS AND EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE TO THE DEWINE-HUSTED ADMINISTRATION FOR ITS CONTINUED SUPPORT OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE STRONG INVESTMENTS IN INDIGENT DEFENSE REIMBURSEMENT INCLUDED IN THEIR BIENNIAL BUDGET PROPOSAL.

CCAO POLICY TEAM

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY: TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR CASE TO STATE POLICYMAKERS

by Adam Schwiebert, CCAO Policy Analyst

With a new General Assembly session underway, peak member advocacy season is now upon us. With thousands of lobbyists, interest groups and citizens looking to achieve their legislative goals at the statehouse, CCAO members may ask, how can I be an effective advocate for my county?

Fortunately, county advocacy is not difficult; it just requires a little sustained effort. Here are a few quick tips from the CCAO policy team to sharpen your advocacy skills.

1. Invest in relationships with your state lawmakers

The key to building strong working relationships with lawmakers is consistent two-way communication. Taking the time to sit down with lawmakers to discuss county priorities is time well spent.

Remember, many state lawmakers do not have the same county government experience as you. Taking the time to explain how your policy agenda will benefit your county and even more importantly, county residents, can allow lawmakers to see issues from your point of view.

There are many ways to stay engaged with lawmakers. Invite them for periodic updates on county and state government developments, share with them CCAO materials on county policy priorities, or simply give them a quick call or text from time to time. The key here is sustained effort to keep communications channels open.

Also, remember to be a good listener; effective advocacy is a two-way street. Lawmakers have a great deal of insight on the legislative process. Take the time to hear their own thoughts on the issue and their ideas for how they can get it enacted.

2. Engage multiple forms of media

In addition to direct meetings with lawmakers, be sure to engage local media to promote your agenda

to the public. Building broad-based public support behind your agenda is a powerful tool to influence lawmakers. Consider discussing your state policy priorities with local reporters and drafting op-eds and letters to the editor to your local paper. As public awareness grows, lawmakers are more prone to act on your requests.

In a time of declining local newspapers, there is no guarantee that traditional news sources will cover your story. It is therefore important to generate and promote your own content through social media. Social media is a low-cost alternative that can broadcast your message widely and allows you to control the messaging.

3. Show your appreciation

As you well know, elected officials receive unending requests and complaints but few words of thanks. State lawmakers are no different. Taking the time to thank your lawmakers for assisting your county's policy agenda is a small but critical investment in building a strong and lasting relationship. There are numerous ways to show your thanks. Consider a press release, resolution or other form of public thanks to show your appreciation for your lawmakers' efforts on behalf of the county. Social media is another great way to publicly express your thanks.

Be sure to engage and thank Ohio's statewide executive officials as well. These officials have considerable authority to make decisions which impact counties, so don't forget to thank them for their support of county government.

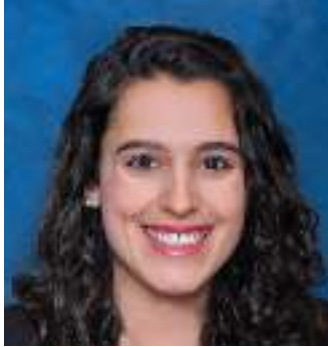
While advocacy is not a formal responsibility to commissioners, county executives and council members, its impact on county government can be profound. A little investment in outreach and public praise can reap long-term benefits. The CCAO policy team is happy to advise and assist counties with any of their advocacy efforts.

FEATURE

LAME DUCK SESSION WRAP-UP

Rachel Massoud, CCAO Policy Analyst

The final days of the 133rd General Assembly resulted in several policy changes of relevance to counties. The so-called “lame duck” legislative session occurs between the November election and the end of the General Assembly in even years.



Massoud

The legislature and administration worked together to pass and enact a capital appropriations bill, S.B. 310. Of note to counties, the bill created a \$50 million grant program for local jail construction and renovation through the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

DRC will prioritize applications which: 1) target county jails which DRC determines to have the greatest need for construction and renovation work, 2) improve substantially the condition, safety and operational ability of the jail, and 3) benefit jails that serve multiple counties. CCAO and the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association estimate \$1.3 billion is needed to make necessary improvements to county jails statewide. CCAO is appreciative of this initial investment in county corrections facilities and look forward to seeing the results of this program.

The capital budget also included \$280 million for the Ohio Public Works Commission and \$186 million for local and regional community projects. The bill also contained a provision which allowed the state Controlling Board to extend the state statutory deadlines for federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds usage and return to Dec. 31, 2021.

After many years, the petition drainage reform bill, H.B. 340, was signed into law. The much-needed updates included in this legislation followed the work of the Drainage Law Revision Task Force, chaired by then-Union County Commissioner Steve Stolte. The bill streamlines ORC sections, provides clarity and makes commonsense updates such as allowing

commissioners to use drones or other technology during project views.

H.B. 24 also made it across the finish line after several years of discussions regarding humane society reform. An amendment was included in this bill to give long sought-after authority to dog wardens to use chemical capture procedures in the field to tranquilize any animal that is putting them or others at risk of harm.

There was movement during lame duck on the issue of providing first responders with compensation and medical benefits following a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis. Conversations about this change began about a decade ago with a movement to provide such coverage in the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC). H.B. 308 was signed into law during this session, which creates a Post-Traumatic Stress Fund outside of BWC and calls for an actuarial analysis and study on how to provide such coverage.

Legislators and the administration also created a new state Kinship Support Program in S.B. 310. The program will provide financial payments to kinship caregivers who have received placement of a child in custody of the PCSA and who are not licensed foster caregivers. These payments are for a time-limited period and will be paid for by the state. Once the kinship caregivers become licensed, counties will pay the foster care per diem. The details of this program are still being determined through the administrative rule-making process.

S.B. 259 revises the time frame for a board of revision to decide a property tax valuation complaint. Current law allows for 90 days after the filing of complaint. The bill allows 180 days after the final date on which a complaint may be filed (generally March 31). The change applies to a tax year that begins on or after the bill's effective date.

FEATURE

NEW GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL TACKLE STATE BUDGET ISSUES THIS SPRING

Jon Honeck, CCAO Senior Policy Analyst

On Jan. 4, 2020, the members of the 134th General Assembly were sworn into office. Republicans hold a 64 – 35 majority in the House, and a 25 - 8 majority in the Senate. In January, each chamber established its



Honeck

committee structure and the members of each party caucus established their policy priorities for the next two years. During the first six months of session, the most important and time-consuming task for the new General Assembly is the construction and approval of the operating budget for each state agency before the state fiscal year ends on June 30. New members will need to quickly get up to speed in a variety of policy areas in order to make decisions about billions of dollars of state spending.

By tradition, the General Assembly enacts four separate budget bills in order fulfill this requirement: the main operating budget for most state agencies; the transportation budget for the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety; and, budget bills for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and the Industrial Commission. Under the Ohio Constitution, appropriations are limited to two years, so the budget bill will cover state fiscal years (FY) 2022 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) and 2023 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023).

The main operating budget is the single most important opportunity for the General Assembly to translate its policy priorities into action. Legislators have discretion in deciding how to allocate the state's General Revenue Fund (GRF) resources, which are derived from general taxes that are not restricted to a specific purpose by law. The largest sources of GRF tax revenue are the sales tax and the income tax. In addition to authorizing spending

for hundreds of appropriation line items, the bill will contain numerous policy changes in permanent law (the Ohio Revised Code) and specific, temporary instructions in uncodified law to guide agencies' use of each appropriation.

The development of a new budget is a joint responsibility between the executive and legislative branches. The initial framework is established by the executive branch in the governor's introduced budget. During the autumn of the previous year, the Ohio Office of Budget and Management (OBM) requests that each agency, board, and commission submit a budget request to the administration. OBM works with the governor and his staff to prioritize these requests and, in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Taxation, prepares a revenue estimate for the next two fiscal years to determine the amount of available resources.

By law, a sitting governor must introduce a budget proposal no later than four weeks after the initial organization of the General Assembly. The proposal contains a "Blue Book," prepared by OBM, with documents describing the appropriations for each agency, the state's economic outlook and revenue estimates, and explanations of the governor's policy initiatives. The Legislative Service Commission (LSC), a nonpartisan legislative agency, will turn the proposal into legislation. LSC also prepares "Red Books" for the legislators that are available online and describe the executive budget proposal for every agency.

CCAO'S PRIORITY FOR THE FY 2022-2023 MAIN OPERATING BUDGET IS FULL STATE FUNDING FOR INDIGENT DEFENSE REIMBURSEMENT.

The executive budget proposal also contains a Tax Expenditure Report from the Ohio Department of Taxation, which details the amount of revenue lost

from each type of tax due to credits, exemptions, and deductions. The 2019 report listed 60 exemptions from the sales and use tax, resulting in approximately \$6 billion in lost revenue for the state. Because counties share the same sales tax base as the state, one of CCAO's budget priorities is to prevent the enactment of new carve outs or exemptions to the sales tax.

The main operating budget bill will be introduced first in the House, where it will be considered for several months in the House Finance Committee. Both OBM and LSC will present their estimates of tax revenue and Medicaid spending for the budget biennium to the full committee. The committee will then break into subcommittees that are focused on specific policy areas in order to hear weeks of testimony from interested parties. After several months, the full committee will reconvene to accept a substitute bill that contains changes to the original "introduced" version. After a final round of amendments to the substitute bill, it will be sent to the House floor for debate.

In order to move the process along in a timely fashion, the Senate Finance Committee often begins informal hearings on the budget even before the House has concluded its deliberations. These hearings involve OBM, LSC, and the state agency directors explaining the details of the governor's proposal. In the past several budget cycles, the Senate Finance Committee has also utilized a subcommittee process, but indications are that will not occur in 2021.

Generally, the Senate finishes its work in mid-June, leaving several weeks for a conference committee to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The conference committee is comprised of six members in total: three from each chamber, two from the majority party and one from the minority. The conference committee will receive updated revenue estimates from OBM and LSC, which may require adjustments in spending. The conference committee report must be voted on by each chamber without amendments.

Throughout the process, the administration remains in close contact with legislative leadership to achieve the governor's priorities. Legislators must remain

mindful that the governor has line item veto authority over budget bills, and will often use it to remove policy or spending items that are contrary to the administration's position. Legislators are empowered to override a veto with a three-fifths vote by members of each chamber, but often find it difficult to do so.

CCAO's priority for the FY 2022-2023 main operating budget is full state funding for indigent defense reimbursement. Because of the pandemic, state budget spending reductions lowered the state FY 2021 reimbursement rate from an expected 90 percent, based upon the funding appropriated, to 70 percent after the spending reductions were applied. Still, there is reason for cautious optimism. Despite the pandemic, state GRF tax receipts are 3.7 percent above estimate through the first six months of FY 2021. State spending is below expectations, mostly because the federal CARES Act temporarily reduced the required state matching percentage for the Medicaid program and because of budget adjustments made last year due to COVID.

Although the annual growth of GRF expenditure is limited by statute to 3.5 percent, the administration may choose to apply an exception that allows for programs related to a mitigating a pandemic to be excluded from the cap. This may temporarily free up more space for increased spending in various program areas. Nonetheless, indigent defense is one of many areas in the budget that will compete for attention and increased funding, and it will take a determined effort by CCAO members to keep legislators focused on this need.

THE MAIN OPERATING BUDGET IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO TRANSLATE ITS POLICY PRIORITIES INTO ACTION.

CCAO 2021-2022

Legislative Platform Highlights

Key County Priorities:

Full State Funding for Indigent Defense

Support counties in implementing and funding Family First Prevention Services Act and state Kinship Support Program

Secure revenue stability by protecting the sales tax base and restoring the Local Government Fund (LGF)

Promote Broadband Expansion

Additional Priorities:

Agriculture & Rural Affairs

- Expand broadband service to the over 300,000 Ohio households currently lacking service through a broad, statewide plan that allows for local participation.
- Commitment to improving water quality across the state by working with agricultural producers and others to provide the resources needed to reduce nutrient loading into bodies of water.
- Ensure a 1:1 state-local match for county soil and water conservation districts.
- Support the H2Ohio fund and expand this fund to benefit all portions on the state into the future.

General Government & Operations

- Abolish unfunded mandates on counties either through modification or full funding, including indigent defense.
- Allow county commissions and councils, and all other public bodies, the option to meet virtually.

Human Services

- State support for counties in implementing and funding the federal Family First Prevention Services Act and state Kinship Support Program.

- Support efforts to support multi-system youth through funding for placement costs and to prevent custody relinquishment.
- Funding for one full-time Adult Protective Services worker in each county.

Jobs, Economic Development & Infrastructure

- Providing proper levels of funding and revenue mechanisms for roads and bridges.
- Prioritize the replacement of Ohio's aging water and sewer infrastructure.
- Partner with the state and employers to find innovative ways to address the devastating impact of the opiate epidemic on the workforce and the economy.
- Encourage JobsOhio to broaden its mission to serve all communities, especially those where smaller projects may be more realistic.

Justice & Public Safety

- Request the state provide full reimbursement for the cost of indigent defense.
- Creation of a long-term state capital jail funding program for construction and renovation costs to address a \$1.3 billion need statewide.

- Establish a Universal Device Fee that is assessed monthly on all numbers/addresses that are capable of accessing 9-1-1.
- Address the impact of the drug epidemic and mental health on county jails.

Metropolitan & Regional Affairs

- Work with the General Assembly, the Governor, and other state elected officials to ensure that the state of Ohio enacts policies and follows administrative practices that eliminate racial disparities in all policy areas.
- Work with the state to find a public transit funding solution.
- Encourage the state to work closely with local health and economic development officials to develop incentives to ensure access to healthy food for all Ohioans.

Taxation & Finance

- Protect the sales tax base, the primary revenue source for county government, from new carve outs and exemptions.
- Restore the LGF to 3.68% of state General Revenue Fund tax revenue.
- Modernize county budget process and budget controls.

Water Quality

- Support continued funding for H2Ohio and other water quality programs.
- Utilize latest research and data to drive further water quality improvement efforts where nutrient loss is greatest.
- Request the OEPA complete its required Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Lake Erie's Western Basin within a two-year timeframe and provide quarterly updates on its progress until completed.

View CCAO's full 2021-2022 Legislative Platform as approved by our members at the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting [here](#).



STRONGER COUNTIES.
STRONGER OHIO.

FEATURE

COUNTY LEADERS HEAD TO THE OHIO STATEHOUSE

Andrew Johnson, CCAO Communications Coordinator

CCAO in recent years has been working to strengthen the state-county partnership, as stronger counties build a stronger Ohio.

This winter, six members of the Ohio General Assembly who have a strong understanding of that goal were sworn into office. Sen. Jerry Cirino (former Lake County commissioner); Rep. Rodney Creech (former Preble County commissioner); Rep. Marilyn John (former Richland County commissioner); Rep. Sharon Ray (former Medina County commissioner); Rep. Brian Stewart (former Pickaway County commissioner) and Rep. Daniel Troy (former Lake County commissioner) made the transition from county to state government. We asked the former CCAO members about their new role.

What led to your decision to run for your House/Senate seat?

Cirino: My entrance into the political realm came late in life. Prior to running for Lake County commissioner in 2016, I was a serial CEO of medical device and distribution companies and worked as a general business consultant. While I was always interested in



Cirino

public policy issues, my extensive travel precluded running for office. After I sold my last business and had more available time, I decided to run for commissioner. My focus during that campaign was on economic development and bringing my private sector management experience to county government.

About half way through my term as commissioner, I was approached by numerous parties about running for an open seat in the Senate. I had never contemplated doing so and gave the idea a great deal of thought before deciding to run. My rationale in making this decision was that I could influence public policy for the benefit of my community in a greater way as a state senator.

Creech: I decided to run for state representative so our district would have good representation. I am

excited to take the voice of our district to Columbus and utilize my public and private experience.

John: As a mayor and then county commissioner, I worked with state and federal representatives on how decisions made, as those levels impacted



Creech

local government. I found policy very interesting and became the liaison between my office and our representatives. With this experience, I felt ready to step into the open seat.

Ray: I have spent many years in public service in a variety of positions; city councilwoman, county commissioner, Board of Election member, bailiff. There are always things you see along the way that you would change if you had the opportunity - when the opportunity became available, I threw my hat in the ring.

Stewart: As a returning Iraq War veteran, I felt a responsibility to continue serving my community, which led me to serve as a Pickaway County commissioner. I loved that job, but after two terms, was excited about the prospect of tackling new challenges at the state level. Public service can be difficult work, but it is important that we have good people serving in government who are doing so for the right reasons.

Troy: I have spent most of my life in elected public office at the municipal, state and county level, and have enjoyed that opportunity to make government work effectively and positively for the citizens that I represent. Over the last two years, I really missed performing that responsibility, and decided to return to the General Assembly when the opportunity to do so came about.

How do you think your experience as a county commissioner has prepared you for the state legislature?

Cirino: Serving four years as a commissioner of a county with 230,000 residents, especially during these unique pandemic circumstances has, I believe, uniquely prepared me for the legislature. Along with

my substantial business experience, the experience of working with local government will provide a sensitivity to local issues that others might not have. After all, dealing with budget issues, the opioid epidemic, the pandemic, public health challenges, economic development, law enforcement, JFS issues and much more, has provided me with deep insights to the operational challenges of a county as well as the impact that certain legislation may or may not have on the county.



John

I would also say that, as a commissioner, I spent a lot of time working with the leaders of cities and townships on many issues. Those experiences have provided an even deeper insight into the issues they face on a daily basis.

Creech: I believe that my experience as a county commissioner is going to help me greatly. I have a good understanding of how government works and have been able to build key relationships across the district and in Columbus

John: County government is an extension of state government. Counties implement much of what is passed by the state General Assembly; therefore, I feel well prepared to help set these policies.

Ray: My experience as a county commissioner has been invaluable as I adapt to the role of state representative. There are so many different areas covered as a commissioner and all are impacted by activities of the legislature.



Ray

Stewart: As county commissioners, we execute state policy at the local level and are governed by the Ohio Revised Code. So we are often more familiar with state law than many other professionals who might be coming to the Statehouse. As a member of the board of directors for CCAO, I also gained a lot of experience with the legislative process that has been incredibly valuable in helping me be productive at the Statehouse right away. As a commissioner you learn to work with other elected officials, and you learn how to carry yourself as a leader and to represent

your constituents, which is very important to the job of a legislator.

Troy: This time around, I have a much better understanding of how statutory responsibilities must be carried out at the county level, and how we need to craft and enact legislation that empowers or impacts county government with that understanding in mind. I've always said that Ohio's 88 county governments are really the branch offices of state government, and my experience in a leadership role in one of those branch offices hopefully will serve me well in explaining to my colleagues in the General Assembly the need to grant the proper tools and flexibility to our county officials to help them in carrying out that responsibility.

Counties experienced a re-energized state-county partnership during the previous General Assembly. How do you think counties and the state can continue to improve this relationship?

Cirino: The pandemic has certainly changed the game in this relationship...for the better. There is nothing like a substantial problem to bring parties together to identify and execute solutions. During the 134th General Assembly, we will continue to work with counties to deal with the pandemic. Initiatives might include the application of federal funding dispersed to the counties, cities and townships to assist businesses and local government operations. In addition, the new operating budget will be another opportunity for the state to provide continued support to local governments. Of course, continued communication will be critical so that the General Assembly can appreciate what issues local government experiences and how legislation might impact them.

Creech: We have several legislators that are past county commissioners. I think the key to continuing the relationships between state and county government is communication and continuing to work together. At the end of the day we are all working for the same people.

John: Many serving in the General Assembly have not served at the local level of government. Therefore, having more voices who understand the impact of decisions made by the Ohio House and Senate will continue to strengthen this relationship.

Ray: This is a challenging time for our country, our state and our local governments. The pandemic and its after effects will impact our budgets and future

economy for years to come. I am hopeful we will be able to continue to find creative ways to partner and support each other.

Stewart: Counties can continue the partnership by staying connected to their legislators and, where possible, speaking with one voice through CCAO. When the legislature knows that an issue is supported by a large number of counties, it sends a helpful signal. I also think it's important for commissioners to be educated on the bills they support, since legislators are serving on numerous committees and may not be familiar with bills that are not in their particular area. Being able to speak persuasively on the CCAO priorities helps your legislator grasp the importance of the issues.



Stewart

Troy: I believe that the members of the General Assembly need to continue to be educated of the fact that if county government does not function properly, than state government is not functioning properly. Most responsibilities of delivering the critical services that Ohio has deemed essential really rest at the county level; the state needs to continue to support that delivery system to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency.

What are your legislative priorities for this session?

Cirino: My plan is to focus on the areas I emphasized during my campaign. They include:

- 1) Improving quality and access to higher education along with workforce development to meet the needs of businesses.
- 2) Improving quality and access of healthcare to Ohio residents.
- 3) Implementing or continuing economic development policies to assist Ohio out of the pandemic recession.
- 4) Continuing support of local governments to provide the necessary services to their communities.

Creech: Being new to the job I am excited to learn and work for the people of the 43rd District. I am going to continue to listen and learn and work to make Ohio the best it can be.

John: Education, Economic Development, Workforce and Fiscal Responsibility have always been priorities in any role I've served. Those priorities remain the same, but with the added complexity of COVID.

I believe we need to ensure all voices are being heard while decisions are made impacting business and residents.

Ray: I am passionate about promoting and supporting adoption and foster families. The opioid epidemic has created a generation of orphans that deserve to have a loving permanent home. I am also interested in expanding technical and vocational opportunities available at the high school level so we can graduate more workforce ready young adults.

Stewart: Broadband internet expansion is my top priority, and I'm grateful that Representative Carfagna has asked me to serve as a Joint Sponsor of the House's priority broadband bill. I am also working with Representative Grendell as Joint Sponsor of the probate omnibus bill that Speaker Cupp championed in the last General Assembly, which will modernize several areas of Ohio probate law. I also want to introduce legislation to enhance the number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans serving on our county Veterans Service Commissions and to enhance Ohio's economic development activity to create more jobs in our communities.

Troy: Our first priority has to be turning the corner on the pandemic. We must listen to science and our medical professionals to insure the health of our citizens, and the resultant renewal of confidence and return to normalcy of our economy.



Troy

The most important public policy document will be the state budget, and the enactment of it and the public policy priorities that it sets will be a much tougher challenge if we do not get the pandemic under control.

Some of my other priorities include a comprehensive review and reform of Ohio's local property tax system to create not only a better understanding of it, but also to improve its fairness and lessen the burden of it on fixed income home owners, better adult protective services authority, funding and capacity to protect our seniors against all the predatory scammers, an accelerated effort to protect Lake Erie, and possible consideration of a separate state bond program to assist local communities in specifically addressing aging and deteriorating underground infrastructure (water and sewer lines) that are a threat to the health of our citizens.

GUEST COLUMN

UPDATES FROM OHIO JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES

by Kara B. Wentz, Assistant Director, Health & Human Services

Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation: What will it take to implement locally?

The objectives of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First or FFPSA) are to help keep children safely with their families and avoid entering foster care, emphasize the importance of children growing up in families and help ensure children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting when foster care is deemed necessary. Family First provides a new opportunity to leverage federal funding for prevention services and sets new standards for congregate care settings to meet the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) requirements.

Prevention Services: Will my county have access to prevention services?

Prevention Services rules will be effective in April 2021. This is not a requirement for all counties to implement Prevention Services. However, the rules will provide the option for all counties to leverage this opportunity to establish who they would serve through prevention services, what services are most beneficial for their community and what the long term impacts are to reduce the number of children in custody at no cost to the county agency for the services. A group of Public Children's Services Agencies (PCSAs) is piloting Prevention Services with at least one of the Phase 1 services outside of, or in addition to Ohio START. Participation includes agreement to: (1) case flow training(s), (2) identification of families for appropriate prevention services, (3) and the provision of feedback as to what is working, what may need revised and how services can be improved. There is no limit on the number of counties that can participate in this pilot.

Additionally, the pilot will offer the state and county another way to collaborate by "testing" the prevention services case flow, determining the prevention service population, and confirming that we are on track with the next set of services that will have the largest impact on the families we serve. The pilot will also help in the preparation for future resource request (i.e. staffing and funding requests at both the state and county level) while the Family

First Transition Act funding is leveraged.

Residential Placements: Will my county lose access to residential placements?

As of October 1, 2020, no new congregate care programs could be licensed without meeting QRTP standards. As of October 1, 2021, the State must meet the federal QRTP implementation deadline; and as of October 1, 2024, all residential programs must be QRTP eligible to maintain licensure.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has released two funding opportunities to assist congregate care settings in becoming QRTP compliant: (1) an incentive payment when the agency submits a plan to meet QRTP compliance and another incentive at the point of the ODJFS Licensing Specialist confirming compliance; and (2) funds to agencies who indicate a service(s) they will implement which is required for QRTP compliance. More information on the Menu of Services can be found [here](#) and the Incentives [here](#).

ODJFS also released the Communities of Support Request for Grant Agreement (RFGA) to assist communities in creating local networks for the qualified individual requirement of the QRTP assessment, secure partners and necessary agreements, and build capacity if needed. This RFGA was created in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Family and Children First Council to provide support existing and new community service delivery. These grants allow counties to apply for funding for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act's CARA Plans of Safe Care, QRTP Level of Care assessments and aftercare planning. Applications are open until March 31, 2021. The RFGA can be found [here](#).

More information on FFPSA can be found [here](#).

The ODJFS Office of Families and Children has worked closely with the Office of Children Services Transformation to align our work and recommendations. More information on CST's work can be found [here](#).

FEATURE

WELCOMING THE NEW CLASS

by Andrew Johnson, CCAO Communications Coordinator

CCAO this year welcomed 57 new members to the association. We asked our 2021 Executive Committee - President Tim Bubb, Licking County commissioner); 1st Vice President Debbie Lieberman, Montgomery County commissioner; 2nd Vice President Tom Whiston, Morrow County commissioner; Secretary Armond Budish, Cuyahoga County executive; Treasurer Glenn Miller, Henry County commissioner; Past President Julie Ehemann, Shelby County commissioner; and Member Mike Halleck, Columbiana County commissioner - to offer some advice to the new group of county leaders. Here is what they said:

What advice do you wish someone had given you when you took office?

Bubb: As a new commissioner be patient and allow yourself to become well acquainted with your fellow commissioners, staff and other elected officials. Come in with an open mind and listen.



Bubb

Every on-going project and issue has a history, and you need to become educated on the work at hand. Pick your spots regarding things you would like to accomplish and find support on your Board – it does take two on a BCC and a majority on a County Council! And take time to go through the CCAO Commissioner’s handbook on line – a wealth of knowledge at hand.

Lieberman: A glossary of acronyms! Really, it would be the impact of county budgets. I had an advantage from 15 years in the auditor’s office and serving on a city council so I had a better understanding of the power of the budgetary process and how much of a Commissioner’s authority rests there.

Whiston: I think that the best advice would have been to always be prepared and plan on spending more time than you would allocate to do a great job!

Budish: My first piece of advice is to get deep into your budget. Make sure you understand the ins and outs. Make sure it’s balanced and, if possible, that you can put aside some additional funds for your

program priorities. The budget is a major policy document. No matter how good your ideas are for improving the lives of your residents, you will be extremely restricted if you don’t have resources.

Miller: When I was a new commissioner there were many occasions when I needed answers but was not sure what the question was to ask. I used my other two commissioners as a resource and they were most helpful.

Ehemann: I don’t really have advice. I had been an elected official for a number of years when elected to commissioner. My biggest challenge was in being the first female to hold the office, and having my fellow commissioners know that I wasn’t afraid to get my hands dirty.

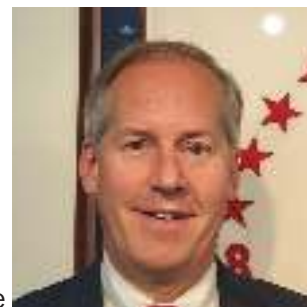
Halleck: The most important is to take your first six months and become a good listener. Don’t make promises you cannot keep with the assistance of at least one other commissioner and finally learn the budget as it will be the most important thing you will need to understand as a commissioner. Communicate with your fellow officeholders.

What advice do you have for our new members in terms of building the state-county partnership?

Bubb: Every commissioner is connected to the political process, some more and others. And every county has at least one state senator and one or more state reps. It is important to get to know them, regardless of political affiliation, and develop an on-going personal relationship. Also, as legislators are termed out it is important to engage in the selection and primary process, and helping to develop new candidates for the legislature; or preparing as commissioners to consider running for the legislature. It is critical for CCAO to have a cadre of public officials



Lieberman



Whiston

with local government experience in the halls of the Statehouse. It is also important to get to know statewide officials that do come from someone's county – leaders in both houses of the legislature, and the statewide office holders and appeals court judges and supreme court justices.

As an association, we need commissioners in all 88 counties with strong relationships with those in state government, so that our members can be strong advocates for CCAO policy positions.

Lieberman: Get involved in CCAO, OCCO and NACo as soon as possible. I remember attending my first CCAO meeting and recognizing how important to my effectiveness that relationships with commissioners and the CCAO staff would be.

Whiston: I think that the MCO Coalition that brought 86 of the 88 counties together demonstrated what our combined efforts can accomplish.

Budish: Building a relationship with the state government is extremely important. The state can help you or hurt you. After you develop your strategic plan, bring in your state legislators, and see how you can fit your priorities with theirs.

Also help connect your key policy leaders (HHS, Criminal Justice, etc) with their state counterparts. Working together is a whole lot better than working apart.

Ehemann: Reach out to your state reps to get to know them. Most appreciate having someone they can call when they have questions. If they don't understand your job, or hear from you, they certainly will not look out for your interests.

Halleck: Get to know your State Rep. and State Senator, befriend them if possible. They will be invaluable to carry out many of your duties. Remember that political partisanship stops after the election.

Were there benefits of joining CCAO as a newly elected official? If so, what were they?

Bubb: In a more normal world (without a pandemic), the big association affiliation advantage is the ability to immediately start networking with and learning from other commissioners and county council



Budish

members from across the state. Most counties have the similar challenges and everyone is working similar issues such as personnel policy, funding capital improvements, economic development, operational funding issues, and bridging the gap with other elected officials. So learning from others and sharing strategies and ideas can be a huge benefit to your specific county.

I have often said, "Your best friend as a commissioner can and should be commissioners in other counties, because they will typically give you honest advice and feedback, and have no 'dog in the fight' in your county." Think of the advice from relationship building as informal peer review and sharing of 'best practices'.

Lieberman: The 'new' commissioner training was invaluable, and I hear every year from new commissioners how helpful it is. I think CCAO is so well structured that there is committee work for everyone who wants to get involved.

Whiston: The interactions with other commissioners are invaluable to do a great job. Learning from the experience of others makes the job so much easier and rewarding.

Budish: CCAO can be a wonderful partner in many ways. Read the information they put out; they will keep you up to date with issues impacting your county. Join a committee or attend board meetings to learn more. The CCAO can be a great lobbyist for your needs: make sure they know the issues you're facing (state and federal). I'm not usually a big participant in organizations like this, but CCAO is really good. CCAO provides a great way to meet and gain knowledge from your fellow county office holders. It's



Miller

"YOUR BEST FRIEND AS A COMMISSIONER CAN AND SHOULD BE COMMISSIONERS IN OTHER COUNTIES, BECAUSE THEY WILL TYPICALLY GIVE YOU HONEST ADVICE AND FEEDBACK" - TIM BUBB, CCAO PRESIDENT AND LICKING COUNTY COMMISSIONER

amazing how much you can learn from both successes and failures by others.

Miller: I attended the new Commissioner Conference when it was offered by CCAO. The conference was a great source for answers. The staff was and is very knowledgeable over a very broad base of topics. I

used the Commissioners' Manual, reading it cover to cover. CCAO has been a blessing! The Legislative team is top notch. They are there to answer questions and help in any capacity needed. As the years have gone by, I still lean on the CCAO staff for answers.

Ehemann: CCAO was and has been a great resource! The staff have always been helpful. The relationships that you make with other commissioners will be valuable.

Halleck: The benefits are invaluable. When I was first elected in the 1990's I had no idea what CCAO did. Having spent over 20 years within this organization, I have found that the many laws that get passed can be a benefit or a detriment to carrying out our duties. Being involved can influence those outcomes. The networking with fellow commissioners cannot be overstated as I have learned many other ways of advancing my county's agenda for the better.

A large part of what makes CCAO a successful organization is building relationships with one another. What do you think is the best way to do that now in these COVID-19 times?

Bubb: I am 'old school' and relish face-to-face relationship building, so the 'virtual' world of communication is less effective in my mind. In these computer screen meetings it is obvious many people are distracted, and at times it is hard to read body language and/or decipher what people are thinking. Yet, if that is all we have at the moment then make the best of it!

Take time before and after a Zoom meeting, and just talk informally about what is happening. At the start of the January CCAO board meeting, we not only took a roll call; but we went around the 'Zoom room' and had each of our 35-board members introduce themselves, briefly talk about their county and tell the group something about themselves. It was enlightening. You can follow-up virtual meetings



Halleck

with personal calls and texts. And, consider going 'old school' and inviting a neighboring commissioner or commissioners to coffee or lunch on common 'socially distanced' ground.

Lieberman: I think we need to go past the work part of our engagement. I think we need to include social 'Zoom' time in our schedules so that we can build the kind of informal relationships that we benefited from in our pre-Covid world.

Whiston: Even though we cannot always meet in person, having interaction is still a great way to build relationships. Even if only through text, e-mails or snail mail.

Ehemann: That is going to be hard! New commissioners need to participate in webinars and committees so names and faces start to be familiar to them. I would encourage veteran commissioners to assist the new persons in meeting CCAO.

Halleck: The easy answer is to call those you know on occasion for a friendly chat and learn what is going on in their "world". Participate in as many Zoom calls as practical.



Ehemann

Is there anything else you would like to mention?

Bubb: As the statewide mass vaccination program starts rolling and the pandemic starts to fade later this year – my hope is to return to in-person and/or hybrid meetings as soon as it makes sense – fully understanding that 'virtual' meetings may in many cases become the preferred format

Ehemann: CCAO has always had open doors and open arms! We are fortunate to have them as a resource.

Whiston: Carpe Diem. Time goes by so fast. Grab hold of the moments and relish the blessing of service.

“CARPE DIEM. TIME GOES BY SO FAST. GRAB HOLD OF THE MOMENTS AND RELISH THE BLESSING OF SERVICE.” - TOM WHISTON, CCAO 2ND VICE PRESIDENT AND MORROW COUNTY COMMISSIONER

2021 NEWLY ELECTED CCAO MEMBERS



Brian Winegardner
Allen County Commissioner

David Bambauer
Auglaize County Commissioner

Christopher Modranski
Carroll County Commissioner

Timothy Cassady
Champaign County Commissioner

Bonnie Batchler
Clermont County Commissioner

Roy Paparodis
Columbiana County Commissioner

Rick Conkle
Coshocton County Commissioner

Larry Schmidt
Crawford County Commissioner

Martin J. Sweeney
Cuyahoga County Council Member

Larry Holmes
Darke County Commissioner

David Kern
Defiance County Commissioner

Joe Short
Fulton County Commissioner

Q. Jay Stapleton
Gallia County Commissioner

M. Eugene Greene
Gallia County Commissioner

Rick Perales
Greene County Commissioner

Jack Marlin
Guernsey County Commissioner

Alicia Reece
Hamilton County Commissioner

William Bateson
Hancock County Commissioner

Mike Pepple
Hancock County Commissioner

Fred Rush
Hardin County Commissioner

Donnie Willis
Jackson County Commissioner

Tony Morelli
Jefferson County Commissioner

John Plecnik
Lake County Commissioner

Mark Robinson
Logan County Commissioner

Michelle Hung
Lorain County Commissioner

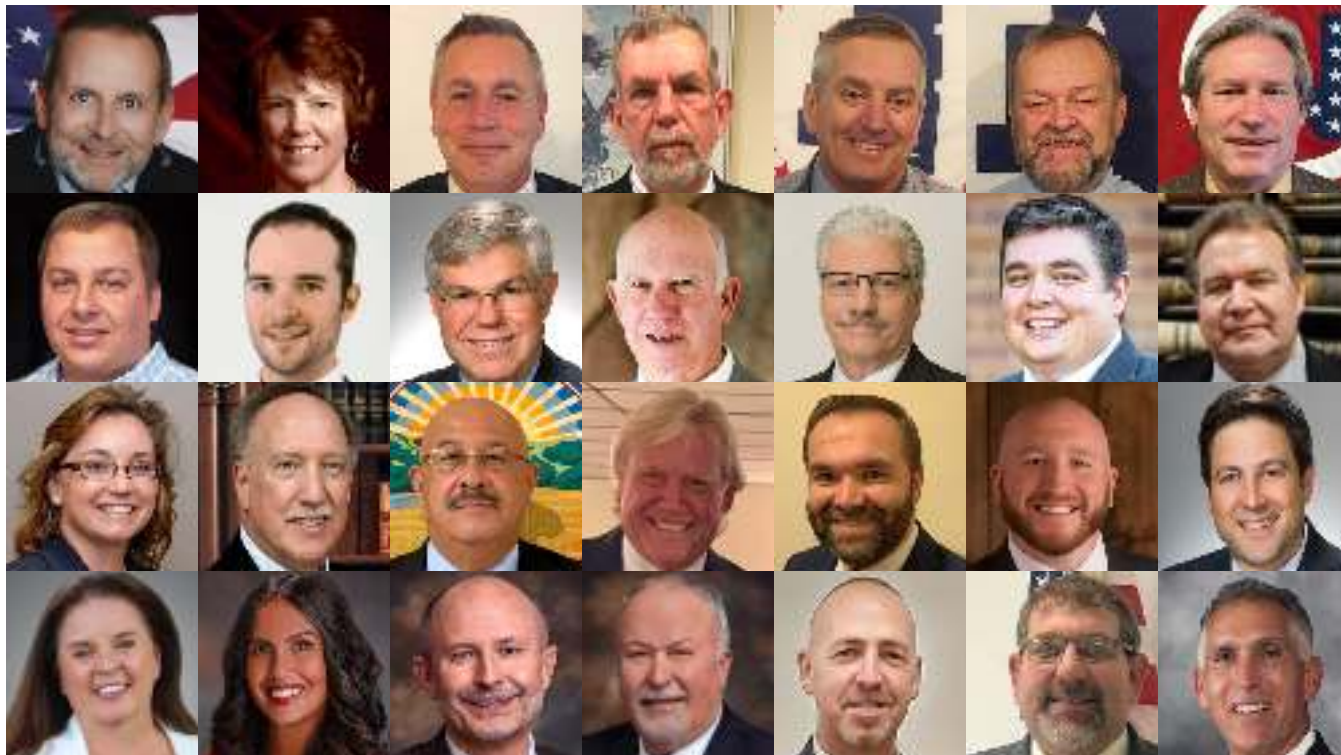
David Moore
Lorain County Commissioner

Chris Wallace
Madison County Commissioner

Steve Hambley
Medina County Commissioner

Shannon Miller
Meigs County Commissioner

2021 NEWLY ELECTED CCAO MEMBERS



Wade Westfall
Miami County Commissioner

Diane Burkhart
Monroe County Commissioner

L. William Bolon
Monroe County Commissioner

Richard Welsh
Morgan County Commissioner

Tim Abraham
Morrow County Commissioner

Timothy Siegfried
Morrow County Commissioner

Gary Saling
Noble County Commissioner

Clint Vance
Paulding County Commissioner

Derek Householder
Perry County Commissioner

Gary Scherer
Pickaway County Commissioner

Jeff Chattin
Pike County Commissioner

Tony Badalamenti
Portage County Commissioner

Adam Craft
Preble County Commissioner

David Haber
Preble County Commissioner

Rachael Vonderhaar
Preble County Commissioner

Cliff Mears
Richland County Commissioner

James Lowe
Ross County Commissioner

Charles Schwochow
Sandusky County Commissioner

Scottie Powell
Scioto County Commissioner

Tyler Shuff
Seneca County Commissioner

Anthony DeVitis
Summit County Council Member

Rita Darrow
Summit County Council Member

Niki Frenchko
Trumbull County Commissioner

Dave Burke
Union County Commissioner

Steve Robinson
Union County Commissioner

James Booth
Washington County Commissioner

Charles Schilling
Washington County Commissioner

Brad Batton
Wyandot County Commissioner

FEATURE

CCAO HOSTS FIRST (ONLY?) VIRTUAL WINTER CONFERENCE

by Andrew Johnson CCAO Communications Coordinator

It's common knowledge at CCAO that the annual Winter Conference is an important event for the association - new officers are elected, committees provide updates, the CCAO Policy Team finds a new way to inject some fun into a legislative update and attendees have the opportunity to engage in informative sessions in rooms in which no one can ever figure out how to regulate the temperature.

The 2020 Winter Conference was always going to be a packed event. In addition to the usual three days of bustling activities and sessions, the 2021-22 Legislative Platform would be adopted, more than 50 new members would be welcomed and the CCAO By-Laws would be updated.

What was already a full slate was thrown off course - like the rest of 2020 - by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CCAO conference morphed into a virtual experience, as CCAO staff and members adapted to make the event a success. Canceling the conference was not an option, as many events had to occur to help shape CCAO's future.

The Legislative Platform, the culmination of months of work by the CCAO committees and policy team, was adopted by the board. The comprehensive guide details CCAO's priorities and positions on a wide array of issues facing county government and shapes the association's policy and advocacy initiatives. It can be viewed [here](#).

Another of pivotal event was the updating of the CCAO By-Laws, which occurs every five years.

Our By-Laws Committee members worked for months to amend and update the foundation of our rules and regulations, and we must acknowledge and thank the members for their work: Clair Dickinson, Summit County council member; Jeff Fix, Fairfield County commissioner; Dr. Thomas Graham, Jefferson County commissioner; Mike Halleck, Columbiana County commissioner; Cory Noonan, Allen County commissioner; Carolyn Rice, Montgomery County commissioner; and Committee Chair Tim Bubb, Licking County commissioner.

A key part of the conference is the election of the next year's officers. Policy Analyst Adam Schwiebert, CEBCO Benefit Specialist Justin Grant and Ali Redmond, CORSA membership services manager, managed the online election that allowed members to elect the 2021 officers: President Tim Bubb, Licking County commissioner; 1st Vice President Debbie Lieberman, Montgomery County commissioner; 2nd Vice President Tom Whiston, Morrow County commissioner; Secretary Armond Budish, Cuyahoga County executive; and Treasurer Glenn Miller, Henry County commissioner.

Wayne County Commissioner Ron Amstutz, Lucas County Commissioner Pete Gerken, Ashtabula County Commissioner Casey Kozlowksi, Delaware County Commissioner Gary Merrell, Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady, Clermont County Commissioner David Painter and Union County Commissioner Chris Schmenk were all elected to two-year terms on the board of the directors.

Of course, no election could take place without the hard work of the CCAO Nominating Committee: Chair Lenny Eliason, Athens County commissioner; Jeff Fix, Fairfield County commissioner; Tony Anderson, Fayette County commissioner; Lori Kokoski, former Lorain County commissioner; and Chris Abbuhl, Tuscarawas County commissioner.

In addition to his duties as committee chair, Eliason also led the NACo Business Meeting as well as that election process that saw the re-election of Shelby County Commissioner Julie Ehemann and Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman to serve on the NACo board.

CORSA President and Fayette County Commissioner Dan Dean discussed CORSA's achievements and updates via video; CEBCO President and Ashland County Commissioner Mike Welch did the same for CEBCO.

Policy Team members Schwiebert, Rachel Massoud and Jon Honeck, while in the midst of a lame duck session, coordinated with their committee chairs to

help them adapt and record their comments and updates.

The following speakers addressed the membership. Shelby County Commissioner Tony Bornhorst, Agriculture and Rural Affairs; Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady, General Government and Operations; Former Summit County Council Member Paula Prentice, Human Services; Allen County Commissioner Cory Noonan, JEDI; Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis, Justice & Public Safety; Summit County Council Member Gloria Rodgers, Metropolitan & Regional Affairs; Fayette County Commissioner Dan Dean, Taxation & Finance; and Lucas County Commissioner Pete Gerken, Water Quality Task Force.

The event also gave 2020 President Carl Davis a chance, albeit virtually, to say goodbye to his friends and fellow members. He offered a calming presence and professional leadership that kept CCAO steady in the upheaval that was 2020.

Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus, Allen County Commissioner Cory Noonan and Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis contributed their thoughts and kind words to pay respect to the members we lost in 2020: Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune, Allen County Commissioner Jay Begg and Scioto County Commissioner Mike Crabtree.

Their comments, as well as a tribute to our outgoing members, can be accessed [here](#). The video was assembled by CCAO’s communications coordinator with the assistance of administrative staff.

While not the conference anyone hoped to have had, many members agree the conference was still engaging.

“I thought the winter conference was innovative, informative and fun! Kudos to the CCAO team for making a difficult situation interesting,” said Darke County Commissioner Mike Stegall. “Also, I loved the ice cream scoop!”

The ice cream scoop Stegall and so many others enjoy is the work of Administrative Professional Robin Garrett, who seamlessly slipped into her new role as conference coordinator and helped assemble

the event engagement boxes.

“I had the opportunity to participate and was glad that I did. I thought the winter conference was presented in a very effective way, particularly in terms of providing presentation and conducting yearly business,” said J.P. Dutton, Belmont County commissioner. “I found the voting system very easy. I look forward to in person conferences in the future because it is very difficult to replicate the private sidebar conversations. That being said, CCAO has done an outstanding job keeping its members connected throughout the pandemic. It is greatly appreciated in Belmont County!”

The event was under the watchful eye of CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, who had a vision and determination that commissioners, county executives and council members would meet to deal with the business at hand and still be a part of the association, even at a distance.

Administrative Professional Nedra Benson was on hand to accomplish whatever task was needed and was instrumental in getting the outgoing members’ service awards for 52 members. She also coordinated with the county clerks to gather photos for the outgoing member video.

We also need to recognize our vendor partners, Palmer Energy, CompManagement and Deferred Comp, who helped create our engagement boxes.

CCAO truly has a great partner in the County Engineers Association of Ohio. With the help of their conference platform, we were able to host this joint virtual event.

If you missed the event or would like to revisit parts of the conference, videos are available online under the Conferences and Education dropdown at ccao.org.

The fact that the conference is available online is the work of CCAO Network Administrator Tim Hoverman, who learned the ins-and-outs of our online platform to host the event.

We truly hope we won’t have to use that platform again and plan to see you in-person for the 2021 Winter Conference!

GUEST COLUMN

APPORTIS OFFERS DATA ANALYTICS FOR COUNTIES

by Phil Payne, Founder and CEO, Apportis

Who is the superhero you need to achieve astounding return on community investment while still being able to create deep reporting and analytics?

As a county commissioner, you are constantly facing tight federal, state and local budgets, spiraling costs, and let's not overlook this little pandemic. With things like this keeping you up at night, I am sure you could have funded several programs if you would have only invested in Pepto Bismol stock in 2019.

At the same time, you shoulder concerns about the health and wellness of your constituents and the health and wellness of your local economy. Are you attracting business to your county or is this pandemic cutting off the legs of the economic growth you had envisioned? Sadly, there is no simple, easy way to handle all of this on your own. I am sure there are days you feel like you would need a superhero to reach out, to organize, to report on your data and to try to save the bottom line – all while trying to save your citizens.

Instead of just focusing on the problems, I want to give you a glimpse at a solution that could maximize efforts within your county. According to the Prevention Institute, "For every single dollar we spend on prevention, there is a 5-to-1 return on investment." As one agency is learning, Apportis can be that investment as they work to strengthen the counties they serve.

I can hear you saying, "show me." A progressive Community Action Agency that serves Fairfield and four other Ohio counties has deployed a powerful new solution to connect their case managers to the population they serve to better focus all available federal, state, local, and private resources especially during these trying times amplified by the pandemic. The Lancaster Fairfield CAA (LFCAA) efforts enable low-income families and individuals of all ages to obtain the skill, the knowledge and the motivation to secure the opportunities needed for them to become fully self-sufficient. It is one of the best returns on investments to the state and local government and economies by providing a larger, self-sufficient population and increased tax base.

How are they achieving this? They have partnered with a Dublin, Ohio company called Apportis – the

only Ohio-based finalist for Governor Kasich's Ohio Opioid Technology Connect Challenge. Apportis has delivered a platform to the LFCAA that has a secure, HIPAA compliant video connection that is designed to work in the most challenging environments, without the need for Wi-Fi. This will work for those who are homeless, and for those who live in remote rural environments. Additionally, this platform is 42CFR part 2 compliant, allowing it to be used by behavioral health professionals to serve those with behavioral health and substance use disorders.

For those in your community with time, transportation and financial barriers who have access to technology such as a cellphone, tablet or computer, this offers innovative and immediate solutions. It also allows for social distancing during these unusual times with the COVID-19 virus. In addition to the video component, this platform provides everyone with instant access to resources, information, and a personal self-help library.

The LFCAA is using this platform to collect meaningful data and develop reporting and analytics to serve the requirements of their partners and the state, as well as looking across the horizon at challenges they might soon face and better equip them for potential new funding opportunities. Data is the new lifeblood of state, federal, and non-profit agencies; now they have a powerful new data tool at their disposal.

Who else can benefit from this technology?

Providing your citizens the resources they need not only to survive, but to thrive, during this pandemic is absolutely imperative. Whether you work for a social service agency, school district, community college or university, behavioral health clinic or criminal justice program, Apportis has solutions to lower barriers to services, streamline reporting and maintain social distancing without losing the human touch.

The Apportis platform can also handle the mundane tasks to help any case manager, counselor, or behavioral health professional be more time and cost efficient. This can free them up to spend their time focusing on prevention, intervention, and increasing client engagement and satisfaction. And with them focusing on the well-being of your population, you can become the hero of the narrative of 2020 and beyond.

GUEST COLUMN

MY FINANCIAL PATH: TAKING A LOOK AT YOUR FINANCES FOR A BRIGHTER PRESENT AND FUTURE

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist, Empower Retirement

Planning for retirement is a part of your overall financial picture, and what you do in one area of your financial life has a direct effect on other areas. That’s why it’s so important to get a big-picture view of your financial circumstances—so you can make better sense of how you use your money and make smart decisions about what to do with every dollar.

My Financial Path can help. This online resource is available when you log in to your CCAO 457 Deferred Compensation Plan account. You’ll find a wealth of resources — from on-demand videos to calculators and tools to informative articles — designed to help you learn more about the topics that matter most to you, like saving, spending, investing, retirement and life’s big events. You can get personalized insight into subjects such as:

- Debt payoff
- Mortgage refinancing
- Life insurance
- Retirement planning
- Growing your investment
- Saving for higher education

But My Financial Path does more than provide you with information. With the Next Step Evaluator, you can determine a course of action for reaching your goals. The tool uses information you provide on your income and savings patterns and suggests a personalized strategy to put you on course. You don’t have to complete any complex, lengthy worksheets — just answer a few simple questions on your financial goals and circumstances.

By helping you improve control of your current finances, My Financial Path also helps you work toward the retirement future you want. From a financial perspective, what you do today can affect how you will live tomorrow. So, My Financial Path helps you do the things that can help you meet your current and future financial goals. Log in to your account on www.ccao457.com and begin exploring the personalized tools available with My Financial Path.

If you want specific help with your retirement strategy, contact your local CCAO Retirement Plan Advisor to schedule an individual appointment.

Want to learn more about planning for retirement?

Your Empower CCAO Retirement Plan Advisors are here to help you understand your 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan and the resources available to you on your journey toward retirement.

Special online events are planned throughout the year, and we invite you to join us as we explore topics like financial fitness and how to boost your savings. Each session includes a 30-minute presentation and time at the end for questions and answers.

You are welcome to attend multiple events, and you do not need to currently be enrolled as a plan participant. [View the schedule and register today!](#)

Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

My Financial Path includes products made available by Empower Retirement, LLC and third-party providers outside the benefits provided under your retirement account. Inclusion of a product in My Financial Path is not an endorsement or recommendation of the product by your retirement account sponsor or providers. Similar products may be available from third parties who are not part of My Financial Path. As such, you may seek to review and compare other product options and speak to your own tax or financial advisor before proceeding.

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VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

CORY NOONAN, ALLEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER



How long have you been a county commissioner?

I am beginning my 3rd term (8 years/began 2013).

Can you tell me about yourself? What is your professional background? What other elected positions have you held? Why did you first run?

While attending the Ohio State University, I served as a legislative page in the Ohio House of Representatives and then in the Office of House Speaker Jo Ann Davidson. After earning my degree I served as a legislative aide for two members of the Ohio House of Representatives (Jim Buchy and Keith Faber).

In 2004, I was asked to serve as the policy director for the Ohio Department of Agriculture. In 2007, I worked with Congressman Jim Jordan, serving as deputy district director in his Lima Office through 2012.

Why did you want to be a commissioner?

In 2011, while working for Congressman Jim Jordan, it became known that two of our commissioners would not be seeking re-election. My experience working in Congressman Jordan's office afforded me the opportunity to work with our commissioners, county elected officials, businesses, economic development team and leaders in our county. I wanted to use the experiences I gained along with the relationships I made to serve Allen County.

What are you most proud of for having achieved in your time as commissioner?

When I took office, the county was several million dollars in debt. During the first six years on the Board of Commissioners, we not only retired the debt, but we were able to complete several large capital projects (building a new juvenile detention facility,

restoring our courthouse clock tower and replacing the roof on courthouse), which have been paid in full, without increasing the sales tax.

What has been the biggest challenge you've dealt with as a county commissioner?

Capital needs. We have dedicated the \$1.2M casino dollars the county receives along with nearly \$400K in sales tax to our capital needs each year. Early in my tenure, we had a study completed on all of our county structures to estimate the update/renovation cost. While the estimate is several million dollars, the study established that once the structures are updated/renovated, we should be spending around \$1.2M each year on annual routine maintenance to repair, fix and extend the life of our county assets. It continues to be a challenge to address all of our county capital needs.

What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?

The biggest surprise would be the amount of time we spend on county capital needs. The biggest adjustment is having to comply with changes in state and federal mandates and being responsible to fund or determine how to operate within the new requirements.

Are there common misconceptions about your job?

Three of the most common misconceptions about our job are:

- 1) The commissioners are not responsible for the maintenance or construction of county roads and bridges.
- 2) The commissioners do not hire or have authority over our county elected officials.
- 3) Policy and laws- I enjoy working on public policy. The research, the debate and the process. My work in the Ohio House of Representatives, the Ohio Department of Agriculture and in the congressman's office was centered on public policy and the legislative process. As commissioner, I take every chance afforded to me to work with our CCAO policy team and our state legislators on public policy.

There can be misconceptions that we as county commissioners have the authority to change state

policy or laws from the commissioner's office.

How has COVID-19 affected county operations?

COVID has affected every walk of life and county government has not been immune. County government is primarily customer service and precautions needed to be made to keep staff and the public safe. Employees quarantining has forced our offices to prepare to be without staff in offices for a duration of time while maintaining the services required. As commissioners, it has been important to work with our elected officials and department heads to help address their office needs and ensure our personnel policies are updated.

HB 614, which made available an additional \$650 million in coronavirus relief funds to Ohio local governments, was recently signed into law. How have you put the CARES dollars to work in your county?

CARES dollars have been used to purchase products to help combat the disease. We purchased sheriff cruisers designated for COVID transportation. Infrastructure updates/upgrades to our facilities to assist with social distancing were completed. Technology upgrades were made to assist employees who telework. We completed a scanning project for the recorder to provide a more virtual service. Our auditor oversaw a program to provide business grants for Allen County businesses.

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?

Cost of county services and growing mandates on county government increases our operational costs. When additional dollars do not follow these increases, it can be a challenge. Strong working relationships with your fellow county elected officials is important when attempting to maintain a balance between the increased costs and the incoming dollars.

What has your county been doing to enhance the state-county partnership?

We have a strong and very positive working relationship with our State Legislators. We communicate with President Huffman and Speaker Cupp on a regular basis on specific issues related to Allen County and on important matters outlined by our CCAO policy team. I believe it is very important to

not only keep abreast of state matters that impact our counties, but to actively participate with the CCAO policy team and take an active role on CCAO committees.

Could you discuss your involvement with CCAO as well as the benefits of being an active member?

One of the most beneficial resources I believe we have as commissioners is CCAO. Between our CCAO staff and our members, we have a great team with the primary goal for our counties to succeed. Understand and research all the services offered including CORSA and CEBCO.

How have you been or what has your county been doing to participate in the state county partnership?

Being engaged with the CCAO by being an active member of committees. I previously served as a member of the CCAO board of directors and currently serve as the chair of the JEDI Committee as well as a director for both CORSA and CEBCO. I make it a priority to communicate with our CCAO team and discuss state issues with our legislators.

What are your priorities or causes?

One of my favorite sayings is "you will never be ready, you can only be prepared." With that said, one of my main priorities is communicating with my fellow Allen County elected officials and maintaining a strong working relationship with them. Similarly, I believe it is a priority to communicate with our CCAO team to understand important issues relating to county government.

Again, a passion of mine is working on legislation and public policy. During my tenure as commissioner, it has become a personal priority of mine to work with our state legislators to address funding for indigent defense and for the state to provide funding for the operation of our local Boards of Elections.

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?

While we do not have a Public Information Office in our office, I have taken an active role of posting updates to our Facebook page which has been helpful for reaching out to constituents. We have active media (tv, radio and print) and have standing interview times with them that is very beneficial in communicating with the residents of Allen County.

LEGISLATOR Q & A HOUSE SPEAKER BOB CUPP

What are your legislative priorities for this session?

The House's priorities at the start of this new legislative session are being formulated in consultation with our 21 new and 78 returning members. Many priorities will continue from the work of the past session in addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: reclaiming lost jobs, supporting new job creation, and reopening local businesses, our state's economy, and our schools safely and fully.

A renewed effort to adopt a new rational school funding framework to support the education of our state's children, that passed the House but not the Senate as the session came to a close, will be made. A new two-year state budget must be adopted this year, and we will work diligently to ensure it is delivered in balance and on time.



As a former commissioner with a long career in public service, how do you view the role of counties in delivering services to Ohioans? Why is the state-county partnership important?

Our local governments are essential to effectively serving the public. Counties have a primary role in law enforcement and ensuring public safety. Our court system, which administers civil and criminal justice, is mostly county-centered. Services to help turn the drug addiction tide, mental health services, providing parks and recreation, preserving essential documents such as real estate and mortgage records, meeting the increased need for foster care and, recently, helping our communities and state navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic are county provided.

Working together, the state and counties can better deliver necessary services. County officials best know the needs of their community, and the state can provide resources that, when combined with local resources, increase the ability to solve problems. Having served as a county commissioner and as a legislator, I know first-hand how important the county-state partnership is for the people both serve.

What advice do you have for commissioners, council members and county executives when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?

Maintain good communication and a cordial relationship. Timely share your thoughts, ideas and concerns. The information and constructive feedback legislators receive helps build practical policies and effective laws.

LEGISLATOR Q & A SENATE PRESIDENT MATT HUFFMAN

What are your legislative priorities for this session?

2021 brings immediate challenges to the General Assembly. First, we must focus on crafting the new biennial budget. The Ohio Constitution requires us to not only pass a balanced budget, but to also pass it before the current fiscal year ends on June 30th. We will meet our constitutional duties. Also, the new 134th General Assembly must pass three additional budgets. Those include the Transportation Budget, the Bureau of Workers Compensation Budget and the Industrial Commission Budget. Clearly, the pandemic hurt Ohio businesses and Ohio's workers. The recovery is underway, and we must be vigilant in making



sure Ohioans have the ability to both protect and provide for their families.

Counties experienced a re-energized state-county partnership during this past General Assembly. How do you see this relationship continuing in the future?

The Senate greatly values your engagement in the legislative process, and I've encouraged my members to maintain strong relationships with their local leaders. We all share a commitment to creating opportunities in our communities, and we need your perspective on the unique challenges your counties face, especially as we recover from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. We look forward to spending time with you in the district to discuss issues important to Ohioans, just as you are always welcome at the Statehouse.

What advice do you have for commissioners, council members and county executives when engaging with their members of the General Assembly?

Keep an open line of communication with us. I encourage you to participate in the committee process where much of the listening, debate, and work is done on legislation. Share with us what you are hearing and what opportunities you see. Together we can accomplish great things for the people of Ohio and the future of our state.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER EMILIA STRONG SYKES

What are your legislative priorities for this session?

Our Democratic priorities are the same as they've always been—to invest in our local communities, expand opportunity for working people and families and to grow good paying jobs that ensure a better quality of life here in Ohio. We must first get this virus under control by expanding testing, vaccinations, and public health infrastructure. Only then can we get everyone back to work safely, kids can go back to school, and build an economy that rewards the work Ohioans are doing every day. It's how we begin to restore Ohio's promise as an opportunity state.



What do you view as the most critical issue facing the counties you represent? How are you working to address that issue?

The coronavirus. This virus hit our community hard. Our friends and neighbors are dying, our frontline workers are overwhelmed and small businesses are on the brink. For Black and Brown Ohioans, the situation is worse. We need more testing, more vaccines, and more support for workers and small businesses negatively impacted by the economic uncertainty caused by this virus. More than 10,000 Ohioans have died, and it didn't have to be this bad. We can and must do better. Collaborating with local partners, providing resources and flexibility are all crucial components of getting this right. We are once again seeing the negative impacts of failing to invest in local governments and public health infrastructure and that must change.

Counties experienced a re-energized state-county partnership during this past General Assembly. How do you see this relationship continuing in the future?

In order to get through this current crisis and to build future opportunity we must grow the collaboration with county governments. Investing in local communities at the city and county level has been and will continue to be a Democratic priority for a long time. Last General Assembly, we were able to increase funds for local governments, for repairs to our roads and bridges and for public transit. While the budget this time around will be leaner, we'll continue to prioritize investments in the state-county partnership, particularly in funding public health and other necessary functions that have been badly impacted by the virus.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

SENATE MINORITY LEADER KENNY YUKO

What are your legislative priorities for this session?

Democrats will continue to fight for all Ohioans, starting by helping families get through the pandemic and the deep recession it has caused. Our caucus will work to make sure the next state budget focuses on workers and families and addresses the much-needed repairs for our roads and infrastructure. We must also fix our state's unconstitutional school funding system by passing the Fair School Funding Plan, end gerrymandering and tackle gun reform. Ohioans deserve to feel safe and have the best opportunities, no matter which zip code they live in.



What do you view as the most critical issue facing the communities you represent? How are you working to address that issue?

Restarting the economy is by far the most critical issue in my district today. The job losses in Cuyahoga and Lake Counties have been especially hard on families who were already having a hard time making ends meet. The reality is that not everybody works a job that can be done remotely, and not everyone who can work in-person has a way of getting there. This is why it is important that we support small businesses to create more jobs and invest in public transportation so people can get to work.

Counties experienced a re-energized state-county partnership during this past General Assembly. How do you see this relationship continuing in the future?

Our pandemic response called for a closer working relationship between the state and local governments. I hope this collaboration has helped my colleagues understand how severely the previous governor's cuts to local government funding and inadequate response to Ohio's opioid crisis have impacted our communities. I'm hopeful that we can continue this collaboration by securing adequate funding in the upcoming state budgets to address the priorities of CCAO.

CEBCO NEWS

A LOOK BACK AND A LOOK FORWARD

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

2020 was a challenging year for the State of Ohio and it impacted CEBCO a great deal. Below is a brief review, as well as some great initiatives that will start in 2021. I am very proud of the flexibility and great service that the staff of CEBCO provided in the past year.



Melissa Bodey, Wendy Dillingham, Justin Grant, Debi Burnette, Tori Sinclair and Hannah Whiston are all very talented and dedicated to CEBCO and our members.

2020

March – on the 12th, based on initial projections, CEBCO made the determination that we would waive member cost share for the testing and treatment related to COVID-19. Initially, it was for our PPO members only, but was expanded to include HSA members after additional government guidance. On the 17th, we announced that all LiveHealth Online and Telehealth visits would also be covered with no member cost share. This coverage was extended through Sept. 30, before benefits reverted to our normal benefit guidelines.'

April

Eligibility requirements were relaxed so that medical benefits could still be offered to employees in the event that they no longer worked the required number of hours to remain benefit eligible. Guidance was sent to all of the member counties with details on how to administer.

COBRA guidelines were also changed so that COBRA eligible members had additional time to pay their premiums after the initial enrollment requirements were met. Guidance was sent to our member counties regarding this change.

June

CEBCO was notified that our Wellness Vendor filed for Chapter 7 Bankruptcy relief and ceased operations. We were able to contract with HealthWorks, a

Cincinnati-based wellness company, to finish the 2019 – 2020 wellness blood draws before the end of the wellness year. Subsequently, after an RFP process, HealthWorks was selected to partner with CEBCO for the next three years as our Wellness partner.

September

CEBCO successfully renewed the Medical/Rx coverage for all of the existing counties. The final average renewal increase was 5.5% after the CEBCO Board of Directors approved the use of \$10M to lessen the renewal impact. For CEBCO, our 17-year average renewal increase is 4.78%, which is less than half of the national average.

October

Knox County joined CEBCO and became the 40th county in our program. With their addition, CEBCO serves over 12,000 employees and 27,500 members. Our total Medical/Rx premium for 2021 will be approximately \$200M.

2021

Effective 1/1/2021, CEBCO will expand our coverage for LiveHealth Online to include Behavioral Health video visits at no member cost share for all PPO members. Previously, only Medical visits were covered with no member cost share.

Coverage for telephone only visits with providers will now become a covered benefit subject to applicable copays for the PPO plans and subject to deductible/coinsurance for HSA plans.

CEBCO is also introducing the SmartShopper Program. SmartShopper can provide assistance to our members in finding high quality, low-cost providers for many common medical procedures (i.e., MRI, CT scans, colonoscopy). The program is voluntary but if members use the SmartShopper program and have services provided by the recommended low-cost provider, they may receive a financial incentive. Details have been provided to our counties.

We look forward to resuming county visits at some point in 2021 and visiting our member counties!

CORSA NEWS

GOODBYE 2020

by John Brownlee, Managing Director, Property and Casualty Insurance

2020 will not soon be forgotten. The year brought with it many challenges. Challenges generate creativity, creativity opens the door for opportunity. Counties across Ohio rose to the numerous and varied challenges of 2020 with creative business continuity plans to deliver expected services to constituents. Many had plans in place pre-pandemic, but who would have imagined that they would ever have to be implemented.



CORSA, just like our members, was presented with challenges that turned into opportunities as a result of the pandemic. The visionary thinking of the CORSA Board of Directors ensured CORSA was able to continue to operate seamlessly. We were in a position, much like our members, to quickly change our delivery of service method from primarily face to face to a digital platform.

CORSA's digital platform allowed members to take advantage of numerous training opportunities. There was a significant increase in the number of county employees enrolled in CORSA University (nearly 23,000 students). CORSA University is an online learning academy available to all CORSA members free of charge. Several hundred 30-45-minute instructional courses are available for human resource professionals, law enforcement professionals, elected officials, and front-line employees. We also provided defensive driving instruction virtually. The defensive driving instructors were able to present to more than 2400 students during calendar year 2020.

CORSA also had to embrace technology required by courts. Throughout 2020 we continued to successfully represent our members in both the State and Federal Court systems. Our in-house claims team met with clients, magistrates, judges, prosecutors and defense counsel using Zoom, GoTo, Webex, and Teams. Not the norm but we were very

successful in providing our members exceptional representation in various venues.

2020 brought additional growth to CORSA. We were able to add new members which include a multi-county community based correctional facility in northwest Ohio, a multi-county port authority in south central Ohio, and a large land bank in central Ohio. This brings our total number of members to 104 strong (66 counties and 38 county affiliates) protecting \$13.6 billion worth of property owned by the membership. The membership also experienced financial growth. Our net position had a positive increase of close to 6% (\$89 million to \$94 million). This is a direct result of the commitment of members, great risk management on the part of our loss control coordinators and local agents, solid underwriting, strong investment income, and a fiscally responsible Board of Directors.

The power of pooling with CORSA continues to prove itself to be the leader in providing exceptional property and liability coverage and state of the art risk management at a stable and competitive cost to our members. The board of directors continuously monitors the needs of our membership in developing new and innovative programs while being conservative stewards of member equity. We are looking forward to bringing new programs to our members in 2021 and to saying goodbye to 2020. Please visit www.corsa.org to learn more about CORSA and our state-of-the-art risk management services.

Stay safe and stay healthy!

WE WERE ABLE TO ADD NEW MEMBERS...THIS BRINGS OUR TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO 104 STRONG (66 COUNTIES AND 38 COUNTY AFFILIATES) PROTECTING \$13.6 BILLION WORTH OF PROPERTY OWNED BY THE MEMBERSHIP

CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

CCAO ENERGY PROGRAMS SHINING BRIGHT

by John Leutz, Assistant Director

What an interesting year 2020 was and we are looking forward to a positive and productive 2021! CCAO offers outstanding opportunities for counties to save on their electric and natural gas costs ... and the future plans are challenging and aggressive. Our partnership with Palmer Energy is firing on all cylinders!



The CCAO energy programs are broken down into five main energy categories. Electric purchasing for facilities, Electric Aggregations for constituents, natural gas facilities, natural gas aggregation, and SOLAR!

Currently, 56 counties are participating in the electric facilities program with estimated savings of over \$1.7 million per year. Estimated total county savings are in excess of \$24 million since the inception of the electric program. The RFP process that the CCAO participates in continues to grow in recognition which attracts more bids from reputable suppliers. This is a strong foundational program for the CCAO Service Corp. and continues to bring both time savings and real cost savings to all participating counties.

There are now over 25 counties participating in the Electric Aggregation program provided by the CCAO Service Corp. Estimated program savings for the last year were over \$3.2 million. Since creation of the program, estimated savings have been over \$54



million. This program continues to grow substantially and in the next issue, we will have exciting news to present as continued community aggregation creates significant price advantages for your constituents.

Also, a top savings performer in the CCAOSC energy program is natural gas procurement for county facilities. There are 56 counties participating in this program and savings last year are estimated at \$1.9 million. Natural gas aggregation is a newer program in the CCAOSC and over the course of the next few years will be able to help many of the counties' constituents with price saving alternatives.

The Solar Program is the newest energy program opportunity. Solar RFP responses for the 50+ counties are due next week. Recently solar tax credits were set to continue and this program has the opportunity to provide substantial energy stabilized rates for many years to come. The energy committee and solar committee are working with the Ohio Prosecutors Association over the next couple of months to provide this opportunity to your county.

In the next issue we will be describing the upcoming push for additional electric and natural gas aggregations in the state. This program continues to show vast opportunities for savings and the CCAOSC would like to accelerate the process of participation and bring these savings to your county and its constituents.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

MANAGING THE 2021 WORKPLACE

Frank Hatfield, CORSA Risk Manager

It goes without saying that 2020 changed nearly everything about the county workplace. The 2021 workplace continues to present unique challenges and opportunities for appointing authorities to find innovative ways



to provide work environments that are positive and productive. Although change is the order of the day, fundamental human resource and employee relations principles are as essential as ever. The Woody Hayes' quote "You Win with People" is as relevant now as it was over a half-century. Below is just a few non-exhaustive list of items to consider as you embark on managing the 2021 workplace:

Maximize Resources: Appointing authority employers across Ohio have several no or low-cost resources available to assist with management of ever-changing developments and laws that impact the workplace. The County Prosecutor's Office should always be consulted before implementing changes to employment policies or practices to review potential legal risks and ensure compliance with the law. The County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) has several no cost employment related resources available such as webinars and articles to assist with your employment needs. Visit www.ccao.org. Counties that are members of the County Risk Sharing Authority (CORSA) can utilize a plethora of no cost employment and legal services and resources that can be found at www.corsa.org. Several counties also are members of the Ohio Public Employer Labor Relations Association, www.ohpelra.org, which provides public sector employment trainings and resources. Employers should also remain focused on employee on the job safety. Now is the time to review and revise employer safety programs and utilize internal safety committees or outside associations such as the County Loss Control Coordinator's Association at <https://clcca.com/>.

Know Current Policies/Practices/Law, Continuously Monitor, and Be Prepared for Changes: The myriad of changes (temporary and permanent) to how appointing authorities manage workplaces are numerous and significant. For example, paid employee COVID leave and Temporary FMLA under federal law expired on Dec. 31, 2021. However, there is a possibility that these leaves may return in some form under the Biden Administration and, as such, employers should be prepared to quickly adapt to possible future changes. Also, employee vaccination is a prevalent issue. Although the COVID vaccination rollout is in an early stage, it is a quickly changing issue. As a result, counties need to be flexible on their approach employee vaccinations as the science and law concerning this issue evolves. Counties must also consider the specific facts in each case. As always, employers should consult with legal counsel on these matters. Additionally, appointing authorities are well advised to formulate a plan for post-pandemic operations. For example, many employees that now work remotely may return to the office setting. Now is the time to plan for human resource, cybersecurity and operational implications of a physical return to work of remote employees and for those that will continue to work remotely.

Stay focused on Employee Safety Outside of the Office:

Appointing authorities should remain focused on employee safety in all aspects, but especially those that drive on the job. We may think the roads are currently safer because less people are driving due to the pandemic; however, the opposite is true. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that roadway fatalities increased 4.6% in the first nine months of 2020 despite less traffic due to COVID restrictions. Moreover, Ohio is statistically one of the most hazardous winter driving states according to the Auto Insurance Center. Appointing authorities are wise to provide defensive driver training, obtain employee motor vehicle reports/driver monitoring, have a driver safety policy, and otherwise promote a safe driving culture.

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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 614-203-8920.