

THE CORD REPORT

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of CORD



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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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Remainder of the 135th General Assembly

The rest of the legislative calendar for 2024, and the 135th General Assembly, has been set. The Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate are set to return to the Statehouse the week of November 11 - after the November 5th General Election.

The legislature is set to return for its “lame duck” sessions - referring to the period after the election, but before the end of the calendar year. It is widely expected that there will be a flurry of legislation between both chambers, with only a handful of session days left before the clock starts over for 2025, and much work left to be done.

Below, please find a summary, along with the latest status, of several pieces of legislation that CORD is monitoring. Please contact me via email at michae@gpgrhr.com with any questions.

HB 93 - Tax Liens on Water Bills

Summary: House Bill 93 is legislation that, if enacted, would prohibit a municipality from having the ability to place a lien on a property that is owned by someone who is not the occupant of that property due to unpaid water bills. Today, if a renter does not pay their water bill and moves away, the property owner/landlord is liable for the unpaid water bills. If the owner fails to pay, and that property is in the service territory of a municipality, the municipality can place a tax lien on the property until the bills are paid. This bill would remove the municipality’s ability to place the lien for that reason, and the municipality would be left to find other means of finding payment for the account. An important point to make for our purposes is that 6117 districts and 6119 districts are not currently in this bill. So, while CORD members are currently not affected by HB 93, we remain on the sidelines ready to oppose the bill should we become included.

Status: Passed House 63-26 on December 13, 2023; Has had one hearing in the Senate Local Government Committee on May 21, 2024.

HB 257- Virtual Meetings

Status: Passed House 63-26 on December 13, 2023; Has had one hearing in the Senate Local Government Committee on May 21, 2024.

HB 327 - E-Verify

Summary: House Bill 327 would require government contractors to utilize E-Verify, the software created by the US Department of Homeland Security to verify an individual’s ability to legally work in the United States. This would include contractors who work with 6119 districts. CORD was actively involved in amending this legislation. As introduced, the liability would have been on the District to obtain proof that a contractor uses E-Verify, and that a contractor hired individuals and subcontractors that passed E-Verify. As passed by the House, that liability now solely exists with the contractor. CORD remains an interested party to this bill.



Status: Passed 85-6 on June 12, 2024; referred to the Senate General Government Committee and is awaiting its first hearing.

HB 491 - Local Government Expenditures

Summary: House Bill 491 would require political subdivisions, including villages, and 6119 districts, to provide information on expenditures to the Ohio Treasurer for inclusion in the State and Local Government Database. This legislation is an extension of the “Ohio Checkbook” initiative, meant to provide the citizens of Ohio with greater transparency. CORD is opposed to this legislation, as it would put an undue burden on the smaller districts. CORD worked with the Ohio Rural Water Association to develop opponent testimony, which ORWA delivered to the House State and Local Government committee on June 11, 2024.

Status: Has had two hearings in the House State and Local Government committee.



NEW MANDATORY TRAINING MUST BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 29, 2024



Just a friendly reminder that Regional Water & Sewer District Board Members and staff must complete new state mandated training no later than December 29, 2024. Due to recently enacted legislation, all employees of political subdivisions must complete the training to help prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of public dollars. This requirement includes employees (including non-employee Board members) of Districts. The training consists of watching an 8-minute webinar on ways to prevent and/or report waste, fraud, or abuse, and then acquiring a Certificate of Completion with the individual's name. For additional information, attached at the end of this issue of the CORD Report is a copy of the flyer that was previously sent to all members.

Visit <https://ohioauditor.gov/trainings/fraud.html> to complete the training.



TOP DRAWER REGIONAL DISTRICTS: MID-OHIO WATER & SEWER DISTRICT - MEET ONE OF OHIO'S NEWEST "6119" DISTRICTS

Written By: Tom Taylor
Director, Mid-Ohio Water & Sewer District



Few Ohioans could tell you where Madison County is located. Some might recognize the county seat of London, home of the London Correctional Institution, and others might have noticed signs posted on Interstate 70 West of Columbus when entering the county. Truckers may be more familiar with Madison County as an exit from the "four-lane" at SR 42. There they "fuel-up" and maybe take a shower at one of three heavy truck stops just before or after navigating Columbus traffic. Farmers across Ohio know the County as the home of the annual Ohio State University Farm Science Review at the Molly Caren Agricultural Center. Politicians and history buffs know that Ohio's 54th Governor John W. Bricker, who was also a U. S. Senator and was Thomas Dewey's Vice-Presidential running mate in 1944, was reared on a farm near Mt. Sterling in southeastern Madison County. The County population in the 2020 Census was 43,824 and includes 14 townships. In addition to the City of London and the Village of Mt. Sterling, other villages in the County include Plain City, West Jefferson, Midway, and South Solon. Interstate 71 provides additional access in the southern part of the County with an exit at SR 56.



Still others might know Madison County as home to the Big and Little Darby Creeks, state (1984) and national (1994) scenic rivers. The Big Darby runs 84 miles from its source near the Champaign-Union county line, south-east through Union and Madison Counties including through the heart of Plain City, which straddles the Union-Madison County line. In Franklin County, the Darby runs through Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, where it meets the Little Darby Creek. Directly downstream from the park, the river empties into the Scioto River in Pickaway County. The Darby Creek watershed covers an area of nearly 556 square miles throughout Union, Madison, Franklin, and Pickaway counties.

The Darby Creek system boasts a variety of important natural resources to central Ohio and is known for its biodiversity. Big and Little Darby Creeks are also noted nationally for their abundance of both aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. They are home to 86 species of fish, five of which are endangered in Ohio, including the federally endangered Scioto Madtom. Forty-one species of freshwater mollusk live in these waters, eight of which are on the Ohio endangered list. The creeks' banks are flanked with native vegetation. Floodplain trees such as the buckeye, sycamore, and box elder tolerate inundation. Remnant prairie species are also found along the streams. The Darby is a significant asset to the County, but also creates unique challenges for managing growth and providing water and sewer for business, industry, and residential development under the State's 208 Water Quality Plan. The new 208 Plan for Madison County recently became more stringent with previous safeguards that applied only to Franklin County and now applying to Madison County.

Madison County has traditionally been a rural/agricultural County. It still ranks 18th in agriculture production among Ohio's 88 counties with 94% of the land used for agriculture. But things are changing in Madison County as Central Ohio continues to explode with development. While past cries and support for farmland preservation are still heard, the pace of development has lowered the intensity and volume of the cry. Yet, the County's Economic Development Strategic Plan calls for a focus on its agricultural history and retention of the "rural character" of the County and proposes an "agricultural research and development center" tied to the future of global agriculture.

Madison County is growing rapidly with an expected 30% population growth rate. The Economic Development Plan encourages strategies to capitalize on advanced manufacturing and recognizes the need for infrastructure, housing and amenities like restaurants, parks, and an entertainment district. Economic development so far has been dominated by logistics, distribution, and warehousing with such names as Ace Hardware, Amazon, Torrid, Target, FedEx, and Home Depot, to name a few. Madison County boasts nearly 7 times more jobs in this industry sector than the national average.

So, major challenges needed to be addressed by County and municipal officials given the anticipated pace of growth; the need to encourage economic development; and the need for improvements to existing water and sewer systems as required by the Ohio EPA, while at the same time protecting sensitive environmental assets like the Big Darby.

Many years ago, the Madison County Commissioners established the Madison County Sanitary Sewer and Water District under the provisions of ORC Chapter 6117. Initially, this responsibility was assigned to then County Engineer, David Brand. The County's first wastewater treatment plant went online in 1990 and in the early 2000's the County served smaller developments and responded to Findings and Orders from the Ohio EPA for Lake Choctaw, a residential lake development in the County. When I came to the County Sewer District in 2013 it was becoming clear that the pace of development was increasing. In 2018, we obtained the water and sewer system that served the London Correctional Institution from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, and the vision for future services expanded. At the same time, certain municipalities in the County were experiencing their own water and sewer challenges, and therefore increased interest in regionalization.

At that time, I had been working with the Madison County Commissioners and County Administrator Rob Slane, exploring the opportunity of joining forces with the Village of Plain City to expand water services and resolve pent up demand for wastewater treatment services in the area. Plain City, which straddles the Madison-Union County line, is considered in the Route 33 Development Corridor, extending from the City of Dublin to Marysville with significant demands for development. Concern over pollution of the Darby Creek system by rampant development was of great concern. Plain City desired to expand and upgrade their wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) but concerns over whether the resulting discharge could meet OEPA regulations was a big concern. The Ohio EPA Water Quality Management Plan (“208 Plan”) as it relates to Madison County, also calls for “large scale regional planning and treatment capacity”.

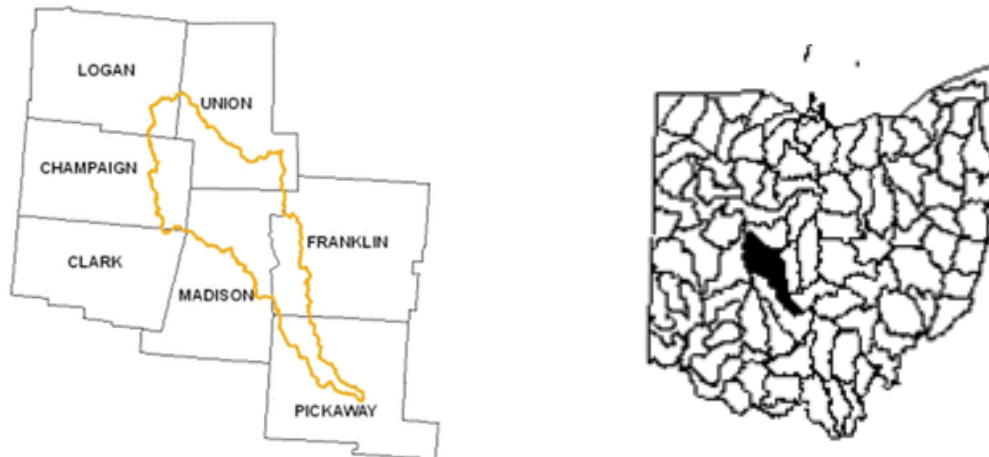
As a result, Madison County and the Village of Plain City hired the law firm of Albers and Albers to assist with the formation of the Mid-Ohio Water & Sewer District . Since part of the District was also in Union County, a panel including the Union County and Madison County Court of Common Pleas Judges processed the Petition to establish the District.

The parties employed the engineering services of IBI Group (now IBI Arcadis Group) to prepare the Plan of Operations. After significant effort by all involved, the parties submitted a Plan of Operations, which was innovative and feasible. It provided for the transfer of all current water and sewer facilities owned by Madison County to the District as well as the transfer by Plain City of all water and sewer facilities to the District. O.R.C. 6119.09 is unique in that it permits the transfer of facilities and joint projects between political subdivisions, which enable these facilities to be transferred to the District. Further, the Plan provided for the construction of a 14-mile force main and the construction of a new regional wastewater treatment plant to serve both communities. The new plant will discharge into different receiving waters which do not enter the Big or Little Darby Creeks.

The District was formed in January 2023 when the Common Pleas Courts of Madison and Union Counties (part of Plain City is in Union County) filed the Journal Entry establishing the Mid-Ohio Water & Sewer District. Since that time, there has been a frenzy of activity including the organization of the Board of Trustees; the transfer of equipment and facilities of the Madison County Sewer District, the City of London, and the Village of Plain City to the new District; establishing budgeting, purchasing and contracting procedures; organizing personnel procedures and hiring needed staff; along with a myriad of other items. And all of this while continuing to move forward with many needed projects. Then, on top of all this, the Ohio EPA has moved forward with applying new standards, located in what is referred to as Appendix 9-3 of the State Plan, to the Darby System in Madison County and other counties, which previously only applied to Franklin County.



The District has now finalized the transfer of equipment and facilities of the Madison County Sewer District, the City of London, and the Village of Plain City to the newly formed Mid-Ohio Water and Sewer District. As such the District becomes the Wastewater Management Agency for the two previous county sewer districts and the facilities previously owned by the City of London and the Village of Plain City.



So, the challenges are great, but the opportunities are even greater! Looking forward, the Mid-Ohio Water and Sewer District is excited to continue its mission of providing high-quality, reliable water and sewer services. Our commitment to innovation, collaboration, and fiscal responsibility will guide our efforts to meet the challenges ahead to ensure that we contribute positively to the quality of life and economic vitality of our community. We embrace the responsibility of being a vital resource for our residents, and we are poised to adapt and grow in tandem with the needs of Madison and surrounding counties.



CLARIFICATION OF COMPETITIVE BID LIMIT & FORCE ACCOUNT THRESHOLD FOR WATER & SEWER DISTRICTS



CORD members have asked for a clarification of the law on the Competitive Bidding Limit and Force Account Threshold for Regional Water & Sewer Districts. Perhaps these questions have arisen because other organizations representing municipalities, counties and townships have notified their members of an increase in the force account threshold. While the force account threshold for these political subdivisions increased on July 1, 2024, the limits for Regional Water and Sewer Districts will not increase until January 1, 2025, at the same time, the competitive bid limits for all political subdivisions, including Regional Districts, will also increase.

Perhaps some legislative history concerning the issues of competitive bidding limit and force account threshold would be helpful. Changes to force account threshold for municipalities, townships, and counties took place in the last State Transportation Budget Bill, H.B. 23, effective on 7-1-23. This law also provided for subsequent annual increases that would be determined by the Director of ODOT to take effect on July 1 of each year. The annual increases will be the lesser of 5% or the percentage amount of any increase in ODOT's construction cost index for the previous calendar year. However, Regional Water and Sewer Districts were not included in this change. Unlike other local governments, who have specific statutes relating to force account projects and that apply primarily to road and bridge projects, in the case of Regional Districts, the force account authority is in the same ORC section (ORC 6119.10) and at the same dollar amount as competitive bidding.

Later, as a part of the Biennial Operating Budget, H.B. 33, the competitive bidding limit for all political subdivisions, including Regional Water & Sewer Districts, increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000. This change became effective on October 3, 2023. Thus, when the competitive bid limit was increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000 (in ORC 6119.10 and ORC 9.17) the same increase in the force account threshold was enacted for Regional Districts. In the case of annual increases for the competitive bid limit and the force account threshold for Regional Districts, these become effective for the calendar year starting on January 1, 2025, and will be at the rate of 3% per year as determined and published by the Director of the Ohio Department of Commerce.

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The below table summarizes the provisions relating to force account thresholds for Regional Districts in comparison to municipalities, counties, and townships with appropriate statutory and legislative references. What is clear from this table is that the force account threshold for municipalities, townships, and counties increased by significantly more than it did for Regional Districts. Based on the increases for other political subdivisions, it appears that an increase to \$116,500 would be justified for Regional Districts. The CORD Board is looking into this issue. CORD is interested to hear from Regional Districts about how important an increase in the force account threshold would be for Regional Districts. Please email any comments or questions that you have on this issue to Catina Taylor at catina.taylor@alberslaw.com and Michael Guastella at michael@gpgrhr.com. Your input on this issue is greatly appreciated as CORD assembles its Legislative Program for the next session of the General Assembly.

Type of Government	Old Force Account Threshold	New Force Account Threshold	Type of Construction	ORC Section/Bill	Comments
Municipality	30,000	70,000	Highway Construction/Repair. Per project.	ORC 723.52. HB 23, Eff. 7-1-23	The threshold increases annually on July 1 by an amount not to exceed the <i>lesser</i> of 5% or the percentage of any increase in ODOT's construction cost index. See also, ORC 117.16 for other requirements for municipalities, counties, and townships.
County	30,000	70,000	Highway Construction/Reconstruction. Per mile.	ORC 5543.19(A). HB 23, Eff. 7-1-23	
County	100,000	233,000	Bridge/Culvert Construction/Reconstruction	ORC 5543.19(B). HB 23, Eff. 7-1-23	
Township	45,000	105,000	Road Maintenance/Repair. Per project.	ORC 5575.01(A). HB 23, Eff. 7-1-23	
Township	15,000	45,000	Road Construction/Reconstruction. Per mile.	ORC 5575.01(B). HB 23, Eff. 7-1-23	
Regional Water & Sewer District	50,000	75,000	"The district may make improvements by force account or direct labor, provided that, if the estimated cost of supplies or material for any such improvement exceeds the amount specified in section 9.17 of the Revised Code, bids shall be received as provided in this section."	ORC 6119.10 ORC 9.17 H. B. 33, Eff. 10-3-23	Threshold increases by 3% beginning in CY 2025 "as determined and published by the Director of Commerce." ORC 117.16 does not apply to RWSD's.

FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE: RENEWING THE OHIO PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION PROGRAM

**Anne Beauch, Director of Communications
The Ohio Township Association**

Editor's Note

This article appeared in the September/October issue of Ohio Township News, the official publication of the Ohio Township Association (OTA), with the permission of OTA. Some parts of the article were deleted to accommodate the space requirement of the CORD Report. Thanks to Heidi Fought and Anne Beauch for permission to use the article.



Ann Beauch
Director of Communications



Heidi Fought
Executive Director

Ohio's infrastructure is the backbone of its communities. It supports everything from daily commutes to water supply and waste management. Roads, bridges, water supply and wastewater treatment systems, stormwater collection, and solid waste – are all critical components that keep Ohio functioning smoothly.

Since 1987, the Ohio Public Works Commission has been at the forefront of financing local government infrastructure projects through the State Capital Improvement Program. This program, funded by voter-approved bonds, has been renewed three times by Ohioans. With the current 10-year authorization set to expire in July 2025, it is crucial that the program's fourth renewal be placed on the election ballot to prevent any delays in continuing this vital work.

During a conversation with Linda Bailiff, Director of the Ohio Public Works Commission, she provided insights into the significance of the State Capital Improvement Program, its accomplishments, and the steps needed to secure its renewal.

The Ohio Public Works Commission

The Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC), established in 1987, has a singular mission: to administer the State Capital Improvement Program (SCIP). Over the years, the commission's role has expanded to include the Local Transportation Improvement Program and the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program, both administered by a small but dedicated team.

“The director administers the three programs, and currently, there is a staff of seven,” Bailiff shared. “Applications are reviewed and recommended by the 19 regional districts made up of local representatives. The OPWC then produces the project agreements, disburses the funds, and provides technical assistance. A body of 12, also called the Ohio Public Works Commission, advises the director.”

Bailiff elaborated on the process, “The program is a financing partnership between state and local governments to support local infrastructure improvement.” The commission works closely with local governments, leveraging state-issued tax-exempt general obligation bonds to finance projects that might otherwise be out of reach for many communities.

Impact of the State Capital Improvement Program

Since its inception, SCIP has substantially impacted Ohio’s infrastructure landscape. The program provides \$200 million annually to local governments for maintaining and building critical infrastructure. These funds are awarded as grants and 0% interest loans.

“The program puts an emphasis on repair and replacement,” Bailiff mentioned. “The 19 district committees receive the annual allocation on a per capita basis, but first, two set asides are taken. Ten percent is for the statewide Small Government Program, where villages and rural townships with less than 5,000 in population may compete for a ‘second chance’ if not funded at the district level. Up to six percent is for the director’s discretionary emergency program, a first-come, first-served opportunity to fund unexpected health and safety threats.”

The numbers speak for themselves. Over the last nine years of the current ten-year renewal period, SCIP has funded nearly 5,000 projects, resulting in a total investment of \$5.3 billion. This level of investment has a ripple effect across Ohio’s economy.

“Infrastructure investments stimulate and strengthen local economies by creating jobs and increasing reliability and efficiency,” Bailiff noted. “Depending on the model, 10 to 15 jobs are created for every dollar spent on construction, and Ohio products, services, and labor must be used whenever possible.”

The Urgency of Renewal

With the OPWC’s current bonding authority nearing its end, it is crucial for the SCIP to gain approval from a majority of Ohio’s voters. “We have awarded funding for nine of the 10 years and are currently soliciting applications for the tenth year,” Bailiff stated. “Those agreements will be released July 1, 2025, and then we’ll be unable to make further commitments.”

It is essential that the ballot issue be passed promptly to prevent any interruptions in the program. The process to get the program on the ballot begins with a joint resolution passed by the Ohio General Assembly, which must happen at least 90 days before a statewide election. This joint resolution specifies the purpose, the amount of the 10-year authorization, and the date of the election.

Bailiff expressed confidence in the program's popularity, citing its past success at the ballot box. However, she also highlighted the potential risks if the renewal isn't approved in time, underscoring the potential impact of a funding gap.

"If we don't have a voter-authorized renewal in November 2025, the program stops...While the program has historically been popular with voters and we are known to be highly effective and efficient, the timing of the ballot initiative during a potential economic downturn could have a considerable negative impact."

What Does the Path Forward Look Like?

As discussions continue about the renewal, there is hope that the OPWC will be able to secure increased funding for the next authorization period. Bailiff informed that while the OPWC has yet to request a specific amount, early indications suggest that state leadership supports an increase. However, the state must carefully consider any increase within the context of its five percent debt service limitation.

While the exact timing of the ballot initiative remains to be determined, the issue will likely be placed on the ballot in November 2025. Bailiff stated, "We have never gone to the ballot without a fallback election." She noted that if the ballot issue were to fail, say in the general election, a fallback election in the spring would be necessary.

The implications of such a scenario could be significant. "If November 2025 is the fallback, we would, of course, post a disclaimer considering we would be soliciting for an unfunded program," Bailiff stated. She stressed again that "If we don't have a voter-authorized renewal in November 2025, the program stops."

In the event that voter approval isn't obtained by November 2025, the program would face a hiatus until a new ballot issue is approved. While the OPWC would still have access to approximately \$50 million in Revolving Loan Program dollars (funded by SCIP loan repayments) and another \$50-\$60 million in Local Transportation Improvement Program funds, relying solely on these sources would be challenging.

As the 2025 election approaches, Ohioans will have the opportunity to continue a program that has proven essential to maintaining and improving the state's infrastructure. By renewing the SCIP, voters can ensure that Ohio's roads, bridges, and water systems remain safe, reliable, and capable of supporting future generations. The impact of this decision will resonate across every township, city, and county in the state, making it a critical moment in Ohio's ongoing commitment to its infrastructure and economy

BREAKING NEWS

As we were going to press the Ohio Public Works Commission announced that legislation to renew the program will soon be introduced in the General Assembly. The bipartisan resolution will be sponsored by Representatives Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton) and Dan P. Troy (D-Willowick). The resolution would permit the state to issue \$250 million per year for 10 years in general obligation bonds to fund public infrastructure capital improvements. Further, it will permit the proposal to be placed on a statewide ballot on May 6, 2025.

Funding by Subdivision Type

Current Authorization Period

Subdivision Type	% of Total	Amount
Cities	44.8%	\$1,037.3M
Counties	25.2%	\$583.5M
Villages	20.6%	\$477.4M
Townships	8.4%	\$194.1M
Water & Sewer Districts	0.9%	\$21.4M

Funding by Infrastructure Type

Current Authorization Period

Infrastructure Type	% of Total	Amount
Road	56.8%	\$1,313.7M
Water Supply	18.4%	\$424.1M
Wastewater	13.9%	\$320.7M
Bridge/Culvert	6.7%	\$155.6M
Stormwater	4.3%	\$99.6M

Ballot Issue History

Ballot Issue	Date	Amount	Passage Rate
Original (Issue 2)	11/3/87	\$1.2B (\$120M@10 Years)	70.8%
1 st Renewal (Issue 2)	11/7/95	\$1.2B (\$120M@10 Years)	61.9%
2 nd Renewal (Issue 1)	11/8/05	\$1.35B (\$120M@5 / \$150M@5)	54.1%
3 rd Renewal (Issue 1)	5/6/14	\$1.875B (\$175M@5 / \$200M@5)	65.1%



Linda Bailiff
Director

PREPARING FOR THE 136TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

While the “windup” of the current session of the Ohio General Assembly is still before us and will not end until both houses adjourn “sine die,” it is already time for CORD to get ready for the 136th General Assembly that will convene in January 2025 for two years.

One of the primary purposes of CORD is to protect the interests of Regional Water and Sewer Districts in the Ohio General Assembly. Through the years, CORD has taken positions on a variety of issues before the Legislature. CORD has also developed a short Legislative Program detailing certain legislative needs suggested by Districts. In preparation for the next General Assembly, CORD will be surveying all members this Fall to develop the CORD Legislative Program for the 136th General Assembly.

This will give all members the opportunity to suggest legislative issues that may require a change in state law that would help Districts.

The survey will be very simple and will ask you to identify the issue, explain the problem, and specify an Ohio Revised Code Section that needs to be amended to solve the problem. Don't worry if you don't know the ORC Section- CORD will figure this out. All suggestions will be considered by the CORD Board which will approve a final Legislative Program for the 136th General Assembly. **Your participation and help to identify legislative needs are greatly appreciated!** Below is a short sample of the current Legislative Program.

2024 Legislative Priorities

New Policy Opportunities

CORD is a membership-driven organization. We listen to our members when developing our legislative priorities for each General Assembly. These issues are derived from member input and are the focus of our advocacy at the Statehouse.

- **Support:** Legislation to require ODOT to pay for moving water and sewer lines located within the road right-of-way during road improvement projects.
- **Support:** Legislation to require notification to districts of property to be obtained by land banks and requirement that districts and land banks negotiate over payments of all or part of certified delinquent charges.
- **Support:** Requiring that County Auditor records show the existence of special assessments (even if ag-deferred status).
- **Support:** Legislation permitting districts to form a group for insurance purchasing.
- **Support:** Legislation providing for expanded “quick-take” eminent domain authority for Districts.

- **Support:** Legislation enabling Districts to apply directly for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding.

Clarify and Harmonize Existing Law

There are several opportunities to positively impact the regulatory environment for 6119 districts by modeling existing law in other areas.

- **Reform:** Prevent municipalities from acquiring District customers through annexation where state funding is utilized. (Similar to USDA 1926(b) protection for federal loans).
- **Reform:** Allow 6119 districts to join an association or nonprofit organization formed for the advocacy of 6119 districts. (Legislation comparable to ORC 505.241 - dues for township government association).
- **Reform:** Clarify storm water authority (ORC 6117.02 and 307.79).
- **Reform:** Remove ambiguities in ORC 6119 relating to adding territory to a District.
- **Reform:** Legislation allowing for easier and more frequent certification of delinquent accounts to the County Auditor for collection by placement on the tax list and duplicate.
- **Reform:** Legislation permitting simpler disconnection procedures for delinquent customers.
- **Reform:** Legislation that clarifies which personal services do not require competitive bidding.
- **Reform:** Legislation that defines "unanimous" for competitive bidding purposes similar to the county competitive bidding law in ORC 307.86.
- **Reform:** Legislation to permit districts to charge a fee for the maintenance of storm sewer and road ditches and to relieve the responsibility of townships (OAG 81-039 and 82-025).

Opposition of Harmful Policy

Just as we are focused on bringing about positive changes for 6119 districts, we are also focused on preventing negative changes. Below is a list of policy areas that CORD actively works to prevent.

- **Oppose:** any policy that implements moratoriums on service disconnections for non-payment.
- **Oppose:** legislation that prevents local governments from placing a tax lien on a property when water service charges are unpaid.
- **Oppose:** Attempts to allow PUCO regulation of District rate setting.

WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE MANDATORY TRAINING

What You Need to Know Regarding the New Requirements from the Auditor of State

New Training Requirements

Recently-enacted legislation requires that all employees of political subdivisions complete training to help prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of public dollars. This requirement includes employees (including non-employee Board members) of regional water and sewer districts.

The training consists of watching an 8-minute webinar on ways to prevent and/or report waste, fraud, or abuse, and then acquiring a Certificate of Completion with the individual's name.

Training must be completed by all individuals in your organization no later than **December 29, 2024**. Visit ohioauditor.gov/trainings/fraud.html to complete the training.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who must take this training? Just our paid employees, or everyone, including members of a Board of Trustees?

- **All individuals, including a district's Board of Trustees, must complete the training by December 29, 2024.**

If an employee of a district is also an employee of another political subdivision (township, village, etc.) do they have to take it twice?

- **No. An individual is only required to complete the training once and will be issued a Certificate of Completion to prove the training was done. However, the date in which you must complete the training may differ. Check the Auditor's website for more information.**

Can we watch the training as a group?

- **Yes. The individual in charge of training should maintain a sign-in sheet to document each person's participation.**

Is this a one-time training for existing employees only?

- **No. Existing employees must complete the training by December 29, 2024, and then again, every four years. New hires that are hired before December 29, 2024, have until the end of the year to complete the training. After that, new hires are required to complete the training within 30 days of their hire.**

My question isn't listed here. Where can I find more information?

- Visit ohioauditor.gov/trainings/fraud.html and scroll to the bottom of the page to read more FAQs. Or, you may also submit your question to the Auditor's Office using the form at the bottom of the page if your question is still unanswered.

Who will be checking to see if the training has been completed?

- The new law requires the Auditor of State to confirm during an audit that employees and board members have been provided material and have completed the training. The AOS has developed a model form which includes acknowledgement by the employees and board members that information concerning the fraud-reporting system was provided as well as completion of the training.

CPE CERTIFICATES WILL BE PROVIDED ONCE THE TRAINING IS VIEWED.
THESE CERTIFICATES SHOULD BE COLLECTED FROM EMPLOYEES AND
RETAINED FOR AUDIT.

FOR AUDIT PURPOSES, DISTRICTS NEED TO MAINTAIN DOCUMENTATION,
WHICH INCLUDES BOTH ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORMS AND CPE CERTIFICATES.
PLEASE REFER TO THE AOS BULLETIN WHICH INCLUDES A MODEL
ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM AND A SUGGESTED TRACKING TABLE.



**Ohio Auditor Fraud
Prevention Training**