



MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Tim R. Price, President
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Thank you for allowing me to submit a written testimony. Due to another commitment, I am unable to attend today.

I am Carl Davis, Commissioner in Monroe County, one of the smallest counties in Ohio. Monroe County was formed by the state legislature, in 1813, from parts of Washington, Belmont and Guernsey Counties.

Monroe County covers 457 square miles, with a population in the 2010 census of 14,642. Our general fund budget for 2017 is \$6,967,605.00.

With the closure of our largest employer, Ormet Corporation, Monroe County has consistently had the highest unemployment rate in the state. We have contracted with an economic developer to promote and attract industry, but our most attractive area for development, along the Ohio River lacks public sewage, which deters development. Prospective development migrates across the river to New Martinsville, West Virginia where public utilities are available, so not only Monroe County loses, but also the State of Ohio loses potential tax revenue. Three unincorporated villages, Hannibal, Duffy and Sardis are under EPA orders to develop public sewage. We have had new aerial photography completed and have hired an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study. The latest projections for construction are approximately 30 million dollars. These communities are populated with mostly retirees on a fixed income. Without outside funding, this project may never reach fruition.

We have seen in the last five to six years, a major upswing in crime, with drugs being the biggest contributor. Not only does this negatively affect law enforcement cost, but also the judicial system and since many of the offenders have families, their incarceration puts a financial strain on children's services.

We are under construction on a new 15 million dollar county jail. Our 19th century facility has been closed for several years, necessitating transportation of prisoners to neighboring facilities at an average housing cost of \$60.00 per day in addition to

associated travel and manpower expenses. Since our closest facility is in Noble County, a 30 minute drive, and others we use such as Washington, Belmont and Jefferson, among others, are much farther, at many times we have all our road deputies on transports, leaving our citizens unprotected. Our out-of-county prisoner housing costs have run as much as \$40,000 per month and up. The opening of the new jail will relieve these expenses, but they will be replaced with local jail costs.

Traffic accidents have increased tremendously, along with many well pad and pipeline incidents. We have had many rollovers of tanker trucks and tractor trailers, which strains local law enforcement as well as EMS and volunteer firefighters.

Our county and township roads, which are primarily gravel, with a few paved county roads, are seeing more traffic in a week than many would have normally seen in a year. Road budgets become tighter.

It is estimated that we have 2500-3000 pipeline workers at this time in the county, with two more major pipelines as well as smaller lines on the horizon.

We are grateful for the oil and gas activity, as it has brought money into the county in the form of bonus payments and royalty checks to landowners. It has also brought added responsibilities and expenses, creating a burden on county finances. In order to continue to provide the services that our residents and industry personnel expect and deserve, we need a modest increase in the severance tax, with a substantial share of the funds being returned to the counties where they were generated.

We take pride in providing the needed services, but with the steadily increasing demand, it is just not possible within the current budget.

Again, I thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony.

Respectfully,
Carl M. Davis
Monroe County Commissioner