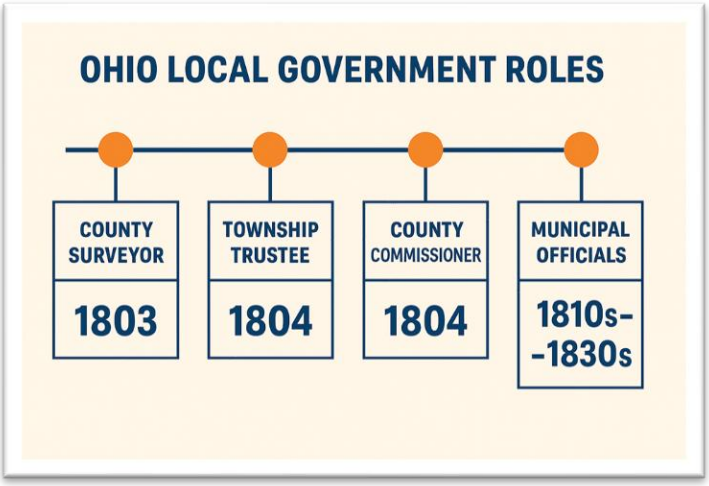
Senate Finance Committee
Scott Coleman, P.E., P.S. – Logan County Engineer
President of County Engineers Association of Ohio
Sub HB 96 – Main Operating Budget – Interested Party
May 30, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

The historical creation of the County Engineer's office, rooted in both surveying and engineering, validates the continued need for the PS qualification today. Rather than abandon this dual-licensed standard, Ohio should honor its legacy, uphold its high standards, and ensure the County Engineer remains a technically, legally, and ethically sound public servant.

- Preserving the PS reflects the original, integrated intent of the office: to ensure that those overseeing public infrastructure also understand the legal, technical, and historical complexities of land boundaries.
- To remove the PS requirement is to disregard Ohio's leadership role in creating one of the most important land-use frameworks in U.S. history.
- The history of the office demonstrates that combining engineering and surveying isn't redundant—it's responsible governance.

The County Engineer's office (originally the County Surveyor) is one of Ohio's oldest local public offices, foundational to the development of organized counties, transportation networks, and property systems in the state. Its early establishment underscores its continued importance to local governance and infrastructure planning.



County Surveyor came first and enabled the formation of townships and municipalities by creating the physical, legal, and geographical frameworks they needed to function. The County Surveyor's

work was literally the first layer of government infrastructure, without which organized township and city government would have been impossible.

The County Surveyor predates the County Commissioner by at least one year, making it one of the earliest established local government roles in Ohio. This reflects the foundational importance of land surveying and infrastructure planning in the early development of the state.

The office of the County Engineer in Ohio has its origins in the early 19th century, evolving alongside the state's transportation and infrastructure needs. Initially, county surveyors were appointed under laws dating back to 1803, the year Ohio achieved statehood. These surveyors were primarily responsible for establishing township boundaries, laying out roads, and managing land subdivisions.

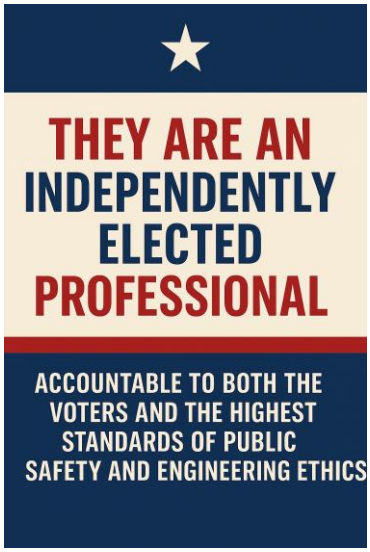
In 1935, amid growing demand for modernized infrastructure and professional standards, the Ohio General Assembly formally established the office of County Engineer. This law required County Engineers to be both a Registered Professional Engineer (PE) and a Registered Professional Surveyor (PS)—a dual licensure reflecting the essential blend of technical and surveying skills needed to serve Ohio's counties effectively.

Ohio's early surveyors shaped how the United States was physically organized
By implementing the first standardized federal land survey, Ohio helped create the grid-based system that enabled orderly expansion, land ownership, infrastructure planning, and economic development across the entire country. It was not just a state-level role—it was a nation-defining one.

Over the decades, County Engineers assumed responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and inspection of county roads, bridges, culverts, and drainage systems. They also continued their oversight of surveying and land record maintenance—essential to economic development, property ownership, and public safety.

Today, the office remains a cornerstone of local infrastructure, blending engineering expertise, public service, and regulatory compliance. The dual licensure requirement has become a hallmark of the position, ensuring that County Engineers possess the comprehensive skills necessary to navigate the complex intersection of engineering, surveying, public works, and legal boundaries in Ohio's 88 counties.

Some argue the PS requirement is outdated. But history shows that removing technical qualifications for the sake of flexibility has often led to poor outcomes in infrastructure. Ohio's early lawmakers intentionally created a high bar for competence in this office to protect public interests. Diluting that standard now - under pressure to "get more candidates" - is short-term thinking that undermines 200+ years of progress and provides no assurance that more candidates will choose to run for public office.



Allowing political convenience to override professional standards will erode the institutional guardrails that protect Ohio's infrastructure, safety, and legal clarity. The County Engineer is not an "optional" technician. They are an independently elected professional, accountable to both the voters and the highest standards of public safety and engineering ethics.

We urge the legislature to reject any proposal driven by local political pressure and instead stand firm in preserving the professionalism, safety, and integrity of the County Engineer's office.

The Cost of Removing the PS Requirement for County Engineers

The following chart outlines the financial and operational hardships various stakeholders will face if the Professional Surveyor (PS) qualification is removed from the statutory requirements for County Engineers. The analysis demonstrates wide-ranging impacts across public and private sectors, each bearing real financial, legal, and service delivery consequences.

Without it, counties and their partners will face rising costs, legal uncertainty, and weakened infrastructure support systems. We urge legislators consider these documented consequences before moving forward with any statutory changes.

Stakeholder	Added Cost	Risk	Result
Counties	$100k–$350k/yr in consulting fees	Budget strain, slower approvals	Higher county spending, longer timelines
Title Companies	$500–$2,500 per transaction	More insurance claims, client frustration	Increased premiums, survey rechecks
Developers	$5k–$20k per project in delays and services	Financing gaps, schedule slippage	Lower developer interest, lost deals
Property Owners	$500–$3,000 per closing for additional surveys and legal fees	Legal disputes, unclear boundaries	Increased closing costs, buyer dissatisfaction
School Districts	$50k–$100k per delayed construction phase	Delays in construction, budget overruns	Higher school construction bids, state penalty risk

Municipal Planning & Zoning Boards	$10k–$50k in delayed approvals, legal errors, and consultant reviews	Reduced development control and record accuracy	Planning delays, rezoning issues
Utility Companies	$20k–$200k per utility project if errors or delays occur	Relocation costs, legal disputes, safety issues	Disruption of service plans, contractor conflict
County Prosecutors & Courts	$25k–$100k per year in litigation prep and defense	Weakened case support, increased litigation risk	More staff time, reduced credibility in court
Appraisers and Assessors	$5k–$25k annually in assessment errors and appeals	Tax disputes, incorrect valuations	Revenue loss, taxpayer distrust
State Departments (ODOT, ODNR, OEPA)	$10k–$50k per project in duplicate surveys and delays	Coordination breakdowns, added compliance hurdles	Delays in permitting and approvals
Economic Development Corporations (EDCs)	$50k–$250k in lost opportunity costs and delays	Fewer shovel-ready sites, less competitive	Lost employer attraction, reduced investment
Parks & Land Conservancies	$10k–$50k per acquisition or easement dispute	Boundary disputes, legal confusion	Halted land projects, lost conservation funds
HOAs and Property Managers	$5k–$25k per subdivision in disputes and legal consultation	HOA enforcement breakdowns, internal disputes	Unclear common areas, internal lawsuits
Townships	$25k–$150k annually in consulting, delays, and plat errors	Loss of in-house engineering and surveying support	Greater reliance on private consultants, reduced oversight, slower project execution

Supporting Citations

1. Land Survey Costs: Land surveys typically cost between $800 and $5,500 depending on property size, terrain, and complexity. (Source: Angi - https://www.angi.com/articles/how-much-does-land-survey-cost.htm)

2. Title Insurance Claims: Boundary disputes without title insurance can cost thousands of dollars and cause months of uncertainty. (Source: Federal Title - https://www.federaltitle.com/how-title-insurance-protects/)

3. Construction Delays: Construction delays often lead to additional costs including labor, materials, and lost opportunity. (Source: Outbuild - https://www.outbuild.com/blog/how-construction-delays-can-lead-to-additional-expenses)

4. Quiet Title Actions: Legal costs to resolve boundary disputes (quiet title actions) can range from $1,500 to $5,000+. (Source: Investopedia - https://www.investopedia.com/terms/q/quiet-title-action.asp)