

Frank Burns

State Representative

72nd Legislative District



323 Main Capitol • P.O. Box 202072 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2072 • (717) 772-8056 • Fax: (717) 772-9965
 119 S. Center St. • Ebensburg, PA 15931 • (814) 472-8021 • Fax: (814) 472-1965
 535 Fairfield Ave. • Johnstown, PA 15906 (Lower Yoder) • (814) 536-8400 • Fax: (814) 533-2368

Website: www.pahouse.com/Burns • facebook.com/RepFrankBurns

Winter 2014 Newsletter

Burns votes against massive gas tax increase

Recently, Gov. Tom Corbett signed into law a bill that is supposed to raise \$2.3 billion over five years for roads, bridges and mass transit by uncapping the Oil Company Franchise Tax, which is the tax on wholesale gasoline purchases.

Unfortunately, to raise the money the governor wants, this law significantly increases the gas tax and hikes fees for more than 150 driver-related services.

Rep. Frank Burns voted against that massive tax increase.

“Pennsylvania has the sixth-highest gas tax in the nation. Our gas prices are 20 cents higher than the national average, according to AAA.”

– Rep. Frank Burns

“Taxpayers cannot afford this incredible expense,” he said. “This law will result in much higher gas taxes, which will be passed down to drivers at the pump. If gas prices increase more

than expected, the tax could be even higher, since the tax is tied to the price of gasoline and the cap has been removed.”

Drivers also will see increased costs for a number of driver’s services, including

driver’s licenses, vehicle registrations and many fines.

“I did not support this bill because I believe it is a bad tax that we cannot afford and it will hurt the people who least can afford it,” Burns said.

Will PA finally be number 1

Pennsylvania is on track to lead the nation with the highest gas tax and highest gas prices. As of February 2014, Pennsylvania’s gas prices were the 6th highest in the nation – and it’s just the first year of the new, higher tax.

- Hawaii – \$4.033
- California – \$3.702
- Alaska – \$3.679
- Connecticut – \$3.665
- New York – \$3.648

PENNSYLVANIA – \$3.572

Of the neighboring states, only New York has higher prices than Pennsylvania.

- Delaware – \$3.446
- West Virginia – \$3.439
- Ohio – \$3.433
- Maryland – \$3.409
- New Jersey – \$3.288
- Virginia – \$3.217

***Prices reported by GasBuddy*

Does Cambria County benefit

Of the \$2.4 billion to be generated, Cambria County only will see a fraction of that funding. Most of the funding will go to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Pennsylvania Lottery to remain in PA

Rep. Frank Burns said he was pleased that Gov. Tom Corbett finally abandoned his plan to sell the Pennsylvania Lottery’s management to a British firm when he let the bid proposal expire Dec. 31. The public was opposed to this idea and the state attorney general found the proposal to be unconstitutional.

“It was a bad idea all around, so it is

upsetting that the governor wasted millions of dollars – about \$3.5 million in consultant fees – to push his plan. That money would have been better spent providing property tax and rent rebates, or helping more seniors purchase their prescription drugs,” Burns said.

The push to privatize the lottery was unsuccessful because of public outcry,

and Rep. Burns said the public should be commended for it.

Pennsylvania is the only state that designates all of its lottery proceeds to programs that benefit older residents. Letting the privatization contract expire ensures that the lottery continues to support these worthwhile programs.



Protecting PACE/ PACENET eligibility for seniors

Thousands of Pennsylvania senior citizens will keep their prescription drug coverage under a new law Rep. Frank Burns voted for.

The law maintains eligibility for Pennsylvania seniors in PACE and PACENET if their Social Security cost-of-living adjustment pushes them over the income eligibility limit through 2015.

Rep. Burns said that without this legislative fix, more than 40,000 seniors would have lost their prescription drug coverage because their relatively small cost-of-living increase pushed them over the income limit. And, this could have ended up costing them hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year in prescription benefits.

The law also lets applicants exclude the cost of their Medicare Part B premiums from being counted as income. This change lets an additional 8,200 seniors qualify for PACE or PACENET.

If you are 65 or older and you need help paying for your prescriptions, please contact one of Rep. Burns' offices to learn more about PACE and PACENET. You can also find more information about these programs by visiting www.pahouse.com/ Burns.

Burns calls for tougher penalties for welfare abusers

Rep. Burns has introduced legislation that would increase the penalties for those who commit welfare fraud. He said the current penalties are too light and do nothing to discourage people from abusing the system.

He also has co-sponsored the following:

H.B. 907 – would prohibit public assistance recipients from using electronic benefit cards to buy tobacco products.

H.B. 487 – would require photo identification to ensure that assistance benefits aren't misused.

H.B. 903 – would prevent cash assistance recipients from receiving cash from ATM machines and prohibit them from using their benefits to buy alcohol, lottery or tobacco.

Welfare Reform Laws Rep. Burns supported

Drug Testing – Drug felons applying for public assistance and those already on welfare are tested to ensure that their benefits are not being used to buy drugs.

Anti-Benefit Shopping – Prevents fraud from "shopping around" for the highest benefit. Residents are now only eligible for benefits based on the amount allowed in their county of legal residence.

Income Eligibility Verification – Requires an applicant's income to be verified for eligibility using an electronic cross-check, 19-point system.

Special Allowance Program Changes – Reduces special allowances and provides leeway for eliminating them. Special allowances are provided to certain welfare recipients to offset expenses for seeking employment.

Gift cards for dentist visits?

A TV news station recently reported that taxpayer money is being used to give a \$25 Walmart gift card to welfare recipients for going to the dentist. This surprised Rep. Burns and he is investigating. In the meantime, let him know what you think. Do you think this is a waste of taxpayer money?

Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications available

Applications are now available for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. If you received a rebate last year, your application should have come automatically in the mail.

The program provides qualifying senior citizens and other Pennsylvania residents with rebates based on the property taxes or rent they paid the previous year.

The program is open to Pennsylvania residents 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people 18 or older who have a disability. The income limit to qualify is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. **Applicants must count all sources of income toward the limit, but only half of any Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits toward their total income.**

The maximum property tax or rent rebate for most qualifying Pennsylvania residents is \$650. If you need a form or help with applying, please contact Rep. Burns' offices.

Remember: There is no charge to apply for this program. If you receive an offer to help you file an application for a fee, please ignore it. Rep. Burns' office can help you file for free.

Burns continues to fight for cancer patients

‘Just like the people I’m fighting for...I refuse to give up’

Rep. Frank Burns has introduced a bill that would provide equal access to chemotherapy treatments to help ensure Pennsylvania cancer patients have access to lifesaving treatments.

His legislation would require health-insurance providers that cover intravenous cancer chemotherapy to equally cover oral chemotherapy treatment. The pill form of chemotherapy is known to cause fewer side effects and improve patient quality of life.

“This bill is necessary to ensure that all cancer patients, no matter what their background, would have access to the highest quality of care available,” Burns said.

Under the bill, co-payments, deductibles, co-insurance provisions and maximum out-of-pocket limits would have to be equal for all patients without regard to how the chemotherapy is administered.

Burns bill to create scholarships for volunteer FF, EMS

Rep. Frank Burns has introduced a bill (H.B. 171) that would create the Volunteer Recruitment Service Scholarship within the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency for active members of volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads.

“These volunteers are some of the bravest, most dedicated and valued citizens of our Commonwealth, and I believe this legislation would better aid our volunteer organizations in recruiting and maintaining new members,” Burns said.

Under the bill, applicants would be required to be a member of a volunteer organization for at least six months and maintain active volunteer status, have graduated from high school or have received a high school equivalency diploma, enroll in a degree-producing curriculum at an institution of higher education within a 50-mile radius of the volunteer organization (or if none exist, the next closest institution), be a legal resident of the Commonwealth, maintain a grade point average of at least 2.0, and apply for all federal, state, or other education grant aid at the time of enrollment.

The bill currently is in committee for review.



Burns warns consumers of scams

Please be diligent when weighing offers for electricity from door-to-door and telephone solicitors. There has been a rash of overly aggressive and dishonest sales pitches in several Pennsylvania communities.

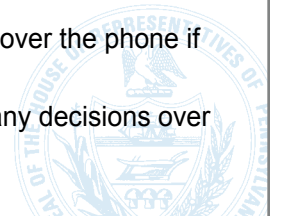
Please consider the following tips from the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection, Office of Consumer Advocate and PUC to help you protect yourself from these types of scams and protect your interests if you decide to switch energy providers:

Door-To-Door:

- Utilities do not normally come to your door, unless you have called them.
- Ask for identification.
- Call the utility company to verify if they have a salesman in the area – especially if the person claims to be a utility representative needing to get inside your home.
- Supplier representatives are required to prominently display a photo ID showing their name and the name of the supplier for whom they are working.
- Suppliers will only need your account information when you are ready to make the switch.

Telemarketing:

- Ask for the name of the supplier.
- Ask for the price and other terms and conditions. Know and understand how it compares to your utility price.
- Only share account information over the phone if you are ready to make a switch.
- Do not feel pressured to make any decisions over the phone or immediately.



Burns fights for rural districts

When the Legislative Reapportionment Commission was working on redrawing the legislative maps, Rep. Frank Burns took the opportunity to testify before the commission about his concerns.

“I wanted to make sure the needs and wants of rural communities, particularly those in our region, were considered,” Burns said. “The districts in rural communities are more spread out than those in more urban areas. Effective and fair representation is important.

“The initial plan was knocked down by the courts because of the many unnecessary municipal and county splits. While the new maps still contain some splits, there are fewer of them.”

State Representative
Frank Burns

P.O. Box 202072
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2072

INSIDE:

- Reforming welfare
- Burns votes against massive gas tax increase
- Warning about electricity scams

lpo.jil.0214



72nd Legislative District



323 Main Capitol • P.O. Box 202072 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2072 • (717) 772-8056 • Fax: (717) 772-9965
119 S. Center St. • Ebensburg, PA 15931 • (814) 472-8021 • Fax: (814) 472-1965
535 Fairfield Ave. • Johnstown, PA 15906 (Lower Yoder) • (814) 536-8400 • Fax: (814) 533-2368

Website: www.pahouse.com/Burns • facebook.com/RepFrankBurns

Winter 2014 Newsletter

Bill introduced for increasing parental involvement in schools

Statistics show that students who have parents actively involved in their education have better test scores, better grades and improved long-term academic achievement.

However, there are no state laws requiring school districts to have a parental involvement program or policy. A bill Rep. Burns has introduced would have local school boards identify and provide resources and materials to parents that could be used at home to help improve academic performance.

The bill would require school districts to set up a districtwide system of communicating with parents, and allow parents to communicate with the school district, including making recommendations to the school board.

The bill also calls for each district to develop a formal parental involvement policy that would state the goals and objectives for that involvement, identify strategies to meet those goals, and explain the resources available through the program. Districts also would be required to create a committee of parents to advise the school board on the program. The bill is H.B. 169.

