



State Representative

# MARK LONGIETTI

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Dear Friend,

This newsletter contains valuable information for senior citizens living in Mercer County. Please take a minute of your time and read about the many state services that are available to you, such as the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program and PACE and PACENET prescription assistance.

My office is always available to serve you and contains a variety of informational booklets, brochures and other publications on state programs.

My office is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. It is located at 2213 Shenango Valley Freeway, Unit 2-E, Hermitage. The office is in the Valley Professional Building, next to the Solar Professional Building.

You can call us at 724-981-4655.

In addition to stopping by my office, you can also reach me via email through my website at [www.pahouse.com/Longietti](http://www.pahouse.com/Longietti).

Sincerely,

State Rep. Mark Longietti

## I voted NO to hikes on the gasoline tax, driver fees

Since the start of the New Year, Pennsylvanians have been paying more at the pump because of a new law that funds transportation projects and mass transit systems across the state.

I VOTED NO on this legislation because it included one of the largest tax increases in recent history. In addition to the gasoline tax increase, the law raises more than 150 different driver-related fees.

That's too much for Pennsylvanians, particularly those on fixed income, to swallow.

The pain at the pump is just beginning this year. The new law will raise gasoline taxes by 28.5 cents per gallon by 2018, and possibly more! That's because the new tax is tied to the wholesale cost of a gallon of gasoline. If future gasoline prices escalate rapidly, so will the tax.

I am concerned about the condition of our roads and bridges, but we should have pursued other sources of revenue, such as a modest tax on natural gas drillers that other states have on their books.



*I attended the AARP Christmas Party. I'm always eager to see and hear from retirees from around the area.*

# Pennsylvania Lottery to remain in our hands

I'm pleased that Gov. Tom Corbett has finally abandoned, for now, his plan to sell the Pennsylvania Lottery's management to a British firm.

It's upsetting that the governor spent millions of dollars to pursue this bad idea, which the state Attorney General's Office found unconstitutional early last year.

Pennsylvania spent approximately \$3.5 million in consultant fees on Corbett's quest to give control of the lottery to Camelot Global Services. That money would have been better spent providing property tax and rent rebates, or providing more assistance to help seniors purchase their prescription drugs.

The push to privatize our lottery was unnecessary because it is well run. The lottery had another record-breaking year, finishing the 2012-13 fiscal year with nearly \$3.7 billion in sales. It had more than \$1 billion in net profits that were used to fund programs for Pennsylvania's senior citizens.

The Pennsylvania Lottery's costs are 2.1 percent of total sales. The governor's privatization plan would have given Camelot Global Services Inc. up to 5 percent in lottery sales as profits and operating costs. Over the life of the contract, \$1.6 billion would have been paid to a foreign company instead of remaining in the commonwealth to benefit our seniors.

## Aware, avoid, alert: Don't become a victim of a scam

Pennsylvania has the third highest percentage of senior citizens in the country, with nearly 2 million people 65 or older. Senior citizens are favored targets for consumer fraud, such as identity theft, charities, telemarketing and sweepstakes fraud.

The Pennsylvania Attorney General Elder Abuse Unit has a hotline to report the abuse, neglect, financial exploitation or victimization of older Pennsylvanians. The hotline is 1-866-623-2137.

## How the Lottery impacted Mercer County in the 2012-13 fiscal year

Lottery prizes paid to winners – \$22.3 million

Retailer commissions – \$1.9 million

Area Agency on Aging and senior centers – \$2.24 million

PACE/PACENET pharmaceutical assistance – \$2.89 million

Shared and free ride program – \$668,311

Property tax and rent rebates – \$3.48 million

Long-term living assistance – \$3.54 million

## Is the PA Treasury holding your unclaimed property?

Each year, the state Treasurer's Office receives millions of dollars of unclaimed property. In fact, one in 10 Pennsylvanians has unclaimed property that belongs to them. It might be yours, and I can help you find out.

You're probably wondering, what is considered unclaimed property? Examples of such property include closed bank accounts, uncashed checks, lost stocks and bonds, contents of safe deposit boxes, proceeds from the demutualization of insurance companies, and expired gift cards or gift certificates.

If these items go unclaimed for five years, they must be turned over to the state Treasurer's Office, which is required to hold unclaimed property. The goal is to return this unclaimed property to its rightful owners.

To find out if that's you, contact my office by calling **724-981-4655**. My staff and I can help you determine if you have unclaimed property being held by the Treasurer's Office. There is no charge to claim your unclaimed property.

# Do you have difficulty paying for your prescriptions? Pennsylvania's PACE program can help

PACE, PACENET and PACE Plus Medicare are Pennsylvania's prescription assistance programs for senior citizens. The programs offer low-cost prescription medication to eligible Pennsylvania residents who meet the qualifications.

## ***Who is eligible?***

To be eligible for PACE and PACENET, you must be:

- 65 or older
- A Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days before application
- NOT enrolled in the Department of Public Welfare's Medicaid prescription benefit

## ***What are the income qualifications?***

PACE and PACENET eligibility is determined by your previous calendar year's income.

### **PACE**

- For a single person, total income must be \$14,500 or less

- For a married couple, combined total income must be \$17,700 or less

### **PACENET**

- For a single person, total income can be between \$14,500 and \$23,500
- For a married couple, combined total income can be between \$17,700 and \$31,500

## ***What is PACE Plus Medicare?***

Under PACE Plus Medicare, PACE/PACENET coverage is supplemented by federal Medicare Part D prescription coverage and offers older Pennsylvanians the best benefits of both programs. Older adults continue to receive the same prescription benefits while, in many cases, saving more money.

My office can provide you with more information about PACE, PACENET and PACE Plus Medicare, and help you with the application process.

# Don't pay for your Property Tax/Rent Rebate

Area residents have contacted my office the past few years inquiring about a letter they received from the Senior Advisory Center, which is actually a private, California-based company, offering assistance to complete the Property Tax/Rent Rebate application.

The center has charged a \$39 processing fee.

If you or someone you know receives this letter, please ignore it! My staff can help anyone with filing the application for free.

Booklets and forms to apply to the program for rebates on taxes or rent paid in 2013 will be available

in my office starting late February or early March.

Homeowners applying to the program should bring proof of county, municipal and school taxes paid in the previous year, and income for the previous year reported on a 1099 or W2 form. If a spouse who recently passed away is on the deed to the house, a copy of the death certificate is required.

Renters should bring a PA Rent Certificate or rent receipts.

All first-time applicants to the program should bring their driver's license to identify them.

Applicants who want their refund placed in their bank account by direct deposit must provide their account and routing numbers.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides state rebates on property taxes or rent paid in the previous year to eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier I income is excluded. The maximum standard rebate is \$650.

# Pennsylvania SeniorLAW Helpline

The Pennsylvania SeniorLAW Helpline is a free and confidential telephone service, staffed by attorneys, providing legal information, advice and referrals to people 60 and older throughout the state.

Helpline hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The number is 1-877-727-7529.

The helpline can address a wide variety of legal issues, including:

- Consumer Problems – credit, debt, bankruptcy;
- Health Care – including Medicare Part D;
- Estate Planning – wills, powers of attorney;
- Pensions – government and private;
- Family Law – elder abuse, divorce, custody, domestic violence, support;
- Housing – landlord-tenant, deeds, utilities;
- Financial Exploitation;
- And many other areas of the law.

## Two bills of concern to AARP and me

AARP of Pennsylvania is strongly opposed to two bills – one that could eliminate telephone land lines and another that could allow the state to auction off the company that generates your electricity.

House Bill 1608 would end price controls that have kept land line phone bills cheaper than wireless phone bills. More troubling, a provision in the bill could allow phone companies to abandon parts of the state, leaving phone service to more expensive wireless companies.

Senate Bill 1121 would do away with default electric service, requiring everyone in Pennsylvania to choose a new electricity provider. If you failed to choose a new provider, the state would auction your account to retail suppliers. These companies would pay the state a \$100-per-customer acquisition fee.

More than 3.5 million Pennsylvanians would be impacted by S.B. 1121.

Please know that I am keeping a close, watchful eye on both of these proposals and that I will do all that I can to protect the interests of Pennsylvania's seniors and consumers.



***Congratulations to Tom Stanton, who retired after serving for 27 years as mayor and councilman of Wheatland. Tom and his wife, Marilyn, were honored with a retirement party.***



***I presented a citation to Maury Keaveny congratulating him for his retirement after serving for 12 years as Mercer County Jury Commissioner.***

# Don't forget your senior discount!

Retail stores and restaurants aren't the only places offering valuable discounts to seniors these days!

The commonwealth provides discounts to seniors for a variety of state services, ranging from driver services to recreational activities. Here are just a few that you should take advantage of:

## Hunting and fishing licenses

Some of the best experiences our state has to offer happen in the great outdoors. The state Fish and Boat and state Game commissions make it a little easier on the wallet for seniors to fish and hunt.

People 65 and older may purchase yearly hunting and fishing licenses at reduced rates of \$13.70 for a hunting license and \$11.70 for a fishing license. Lifetime licenses are also available at \$51.70 for hunting or fishing.

You can find more information on how to purchase a fishing license online, the latest stocking guides, fishing information by your region and much more, by visiting the Fish and Boat Commission's website at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us). Game news, state game lands maps, and other helpful resources are also available on the Pennsylvania Game Commission's website, [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us).

## Pennsylvania state parks

Do you enjoy getting away in the great outdoors? Looking for something fun to do with the grandkids? Pennsylvania has 117 state parks that are considered the best in the nation and many include electric sites and modern bathhouses in their campgrounds.

People 62 and older are eligible for a \$4.50 discount off the normal campsite price. You can find your closest state park, prices, and make a reservation at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us). Reservations can also be made by calling 1-888-PA-PARKS.

## Reduced automobile registrations and driver's licenses

PennDOT offers retired Pennsylvanians who are 65 and older, earning less than \$19,200 annually, a reduced automobile registration rate of \$10, compared to the normal \$36. The income limit to qualify for this discount is per person. It is **NOT** based on household income.

People 65 and older also may purchase a two-year driver's license renewal for \$19. A regular four-year license fee currently costs \$29.50.



***I presented a citation to Church Women United of the Shenango Valley President Donna Johnson marking the organization's 65th anniversary.***

## Bill would allow more seniors to remain at home

Legislation introduced in the state House could help aging Pennsylvanians to live safely at home.

House Bill 1702, the Community Respite Services Program Act, would provide services to seniors who need more attention than the normal scope of services offered at senior centers, but not the full care of licensed Adult Day Centers.

The services would be provided in settings approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. The department would license organizations that provide the services, and the programs would be overseen by Area Agencies on Aging or the department.

The legislation is based on a successful pilot program that has been operating in southern Chester County for several years.



**State Rep. Mark Longietti**  
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- I voted against increasing the gasoline tax
- State discounts for seniors

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## Home heating aid applications available

Applications for Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program are currently being accepted.

There are two types of assistance. Cash grants help you pay your regular monthly heating bill. These grants are sent directly to your utility provider if you qualify. You may also qualify for a crisis grant, which can help pay for emergency heating equipment repairs or replacement.

Eligibility for LIHEAP is based on family size and income.

You can get more details by contacting my office or by calling the Mercer County Assistance Office at 724-983-5022.

If you are eligible, my staff can help you fill out your application and submit it for free.



## About the Mercer County Area Agency on Aging

The Mercer County Area Agency on Aging helps enrich the lives of older adults in Mercer County and enables them to maintain their independence through an array of programs and services.

Its services include a program that helps people 60 and older with information about all types of health insurance, running the annual Mercer County Senior Games and operating senior centers in Hermitage, Grove City, Greenville and Sandy Lake.

The agency is located at 133 N. Pitt St. in Mercer. The toll-free telephone number is 1-800-570-6222. You can learn more by visiting its website at [www.mercercountyaging.org](http://www.mercercountyaging.org).



***Yolanda Leonetti DelMonaco celebrated her 100th birthday with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. It was my honor to attend her party.***