



State Representative
Steve Samuelson
 135TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



34 East Wing
 P.O. Box 202135
 Harrisburg, PA 17120-2135
 (717) 705-1881
 Fax: (717) 772-2469

104 E. Broad St.
 Bethlehem, PA 18018
 (610) 867-3890
 Fax: (610) 861-2104

EMAIL: samuelson@pahouse.net

WEBSITE: www.pahouse.com/Samuelson

SENIOR CITIZEN UPDATE 2014

Alzheimer's Disease Planning Committee releases recommendations

Pennsylvania's Alzheimer's Disease Planning Committee presented its recommendations in February for meeting the needs of state residents who have Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, as well as the medical professionals and family members who care for them.

The planning committee was established in 2013 to examine the needs of Pennsylvania's Alzheimer's population and develop a strategy to mobilize the state's response to the anticipated increase in Alzheimer's disease in Pennsylvania. Currently, there are nearly 400,000 Pennsylvanians living with Alzheimer's or other related disorders in Pennsylvania.

As Democratic chair of the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee, I served on the Alzheimer's Disease Planning Committee, which consisted of 26 members from the legislature, experts working in the field, medical professionals and those living with the disease. The committee held six regional public meetings and five committee meetings to take testimony from more than 100 Pennsylvanians and collect more than 330 comments leading up to the issuance of its recommendations.



Among the recommendations the planning committee made are: increasing awareness of Alzheimer's and its impact in Pennsylvania, improving and expanding care delivery, and maximizing the effort in search of a cure for Alzheimer's. You can read the full report on my website www.pahouse.com/Samuelson.

Free help with Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is open to homeowners and renters who are 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and persons 18 or older with a disability. Your household income must be \$35,000 or less if you are a homeowner, or \$15,000 or less if you are a renter, and you only have to count half of your Social Security benefits toward your total income when applying.

The current application deadline is June 30. My office has applications available and can assist you **FOR FREE** with applying. You can also obtain an application and apply for free at any Department of Revenue office or the county Area Agency on Aging.

Each year, Pennsylvania senior citizens are solicited by out-of-state companies offering to help them file Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications for a fee. Please ignore these solicitations, as there is **NO COST** to applying for this program.

If you have any questions, please call my office at 610-867-3890.

Need help paying for your prescriptions?

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.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for PACE or 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

INCOME LIMITS

Act 12 of 2014, which I supported, extends the PACE/PACENET Social Security cost-of-living adjustment moratorium through December 31, 2015, thereby ensuring that current enrollees won't lose their benefits due to a small Social Security COLA.

The Act also exempts Medicare Part B premium payments from being counted as income under the PACE and PACENET program requirements. This means nearly 12,000 current PACENET enrollees will

qualify for PACE, and more than 8,000 seniors will become newly eligible for PACENET.

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

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.

Reduced automobile registration fee

If you are retired and earning less than \$19,200 annually, you qualify for a reduced automobile registration fee of \$10 (the regular rate is \$36). For more information, call my office at 610-867-3890 or visit us at the senior fair.

Extreme electric rate hikes

Pennsylvania is an electricity deregulated state, which means that consumers have the ability to select their electricity supplier. Companies offer different rates, plans and incentives to customers.

Several companies offer variable rates, which can change depending on the current electricity market.

Recently, many variable rates spiked, and some customers saw bills increasing from 100% to 300% in January.

In response, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) has launched an investigation to examine the rules and regulations regarding variable rate offers to consumers.

Meanwhile, if you, or someone you know, have been hit with an extreme increase, please file a complaint with the Pa. Attorney General's Office, the Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate and the state PUC.

- Pa. Attorney General Consumer Protection Hotline — 800-441-2555
- Pa. Office of Consumer Advocate — 800-684-6560
- Pa. Public Utility Commission — 800-692-7380

Long-term care to have huge impact on Pennsylvania

Over the next six years, the state's youth population is expected to decline, its working age population will remain about the same, and its senior citizen population is expected to soar. Pennsylvania already has the fourth-oldest population in the nation.

This will impact everything – including the state budget and the thousands of relatives and other informal family caregivers who provide long-term care for the state's aging population.

Planning for our aging state

In January, the state created a Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Commission to develop recommendations for improving the long-term care system, including finding ways to provide a better coordinated approach to delivering services and support for seniors and people with disabilities who still wish to live at home. As Democratic chair of the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee, I serve as a member of this 25-person commission.

While the state does provide many options for people who need care but can and wish to remain at home as they age, Pennsylvania needs to find ways to increase the number of services available to those aging at home, and increase access to those services. A number of these programs and services are funded by the Pennsylvania Lottery, so it will be important to keep our lottery strong and ensure that all revenues go to providing services for our seniors.

Informal, unpaid family caregivers

Family members will provide care for an increasing percentage of seniors in Pennsylvania who wish to "Age in Place" at home instead of in an institution. According to an AARP survey, nearly 90 percent of older adults want to stay in their own home for as long as possible. Aging in Place offers a tremendous number of benefits to seniors: better health and self-esteem, familiarity with local amenities and services, and access to friends and family. It also has financial advantages both for the senior citizen and the state



– home-based care costs less than half of what institutionalized care costs.

But caring for an elderly or disabled loved one puts a huge burden on family members. Family caregivers sacrifice time caring for their own children and are sometimes forced to change or give up their careers. Just in financial terms, family caregivers who leave the work force to care for a loved one can lose thousands of dollars in wages, pensions and Social Security benefits. Caring for an elderly or disabled loved one takes a toll on

the health of the caregiver as well.

Stress and other health problems increase, and if the patient the family member is caring for has Alzheimer's or a related disorder, the toll on the caregiver is even greater.



Family caregiver support

Pennsylvania does offer resources and financial aid in support of family caregivers. You can find resources and information for family caregivers at the Pennsylvania Department of Aging website www.aging.state.pa.us. Click on the green "Home and Community Based Services" button at left, then choose Pennsylvania Caregiver Support Program.

If you qualify, you can also receive state reimbursement through the Pennsylvania Caregiver Support Program. Qualified caregivers may receive up to \$200 per month for out-of-pocket expenses and up to \$2,000 in pre-approved reimbursements for home modifications or the cost of assistive devices or technologies. For more information about the Pennsylvania Caregiver Support Program, contact your local Area Agency on Aging or my Bethlehem office at 610-867-3890.

State Representative Steve Samuelson

104 E. Broad St.
Bethlehem, PA 18018

lpo.jil.0314

SENIOR FAIR APRIL 25

Please join me and state Rep. Daniel McNeill at our 2014 Senior Fair!

9 A.M. TO NOON • FRIDAY, APRIL 25

East Side Youth Center

1140 East Clair Street • Allentown, PA 18109
(1/2 block south of Hanover Avenue)

There will be free health screenings, refreshments and door prizes, as well as nearly 60 vendors and state agencies with information on programs and services for senior citizens in our area.

Contact my office at 610-867-3890 if you would like more information.



Rep. Samuelson meets with local seniors at his 2013 Senior Fair.

ATTENTION VETERANS

One day every other month I host Northampton County Director of Veterans Affairs Freddie Ramirez, Jr. in my district office. He is available to meet with veterans and their families and provide information on the important services and benefits available to Pennsylvania veterans.

The director's next visits to my office will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, March 21 and Friday, May 16. Please call my office at 610-867-3890 for more information.

My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Birth and death certificate applications
- Problems with Pennsylvania income taxes
- Problems with the Department of Public Welfare
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, student aid information, etc.
- Citations from Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Consumer complaints
- Problems or questions about PennDOT
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Disability license plates and placards
- Assistance in getting and filling out state forms of all kinds, like PACE (Pharmaceutical assistance for qualified senior citizens), Property Tax/Rent Rebate (for qualified seniors), etc.
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies

Any problem with state government!