



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Spring 2016



CAPITOL OFFICE

220 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055
(717) 787-5142

239 Longfellow St.
Vandergrift, PA 15690
(724) 567-6982

DISTRICT OFFICES

620 N. Chestnut St.
Derry, PA 15627
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building
901 Jefferson St.
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 539-7560

SENIOR UPDATE

Protecting PACE/PACENET for seniors

PACE and PACENET, the state's prescription drug programs for older Pennsylvanians, are both valuable and popular. The programs ensure that lower-income older residents get the live-saving medications they need at a price they can afford.

We're always looking for ways to maintain and improve the programs. Since PACE was first created in 1984 and PACENET in 1996, we periodically have reauthorized the programs, expanded income eligibility and excluded Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. We even modified PACENET's deductible and adapted the program when Medicare's prescription benefit – Part D – was created. All of this was done to prevent thousands from losing their coverage and to make even more people eligible for the programs.

The last couple of years have been no different. PACE and PACENET are extremely valuable and I have been supportive of any legislation that improves these prescription benefits. With my support, Social Security Medicare Part B premiums are now excluded from income considerations. This change has the effect of increasing the income limits by that amount. For most Medicare beneficiaries, that's about \$1,258 per person per year.

Another recent change I supported excludes any Social Security cost-of-living adjustments from income when applying for the programs. For years, tens of thousands of seniors were close to being pushed out of their prescription drug coverage because their relatively small cost-of-living increase pushed them over the income limit. In the past, we enacted temporary moratoriums to keep that from happening. Now, the Social Security COLA exclusion is permanent.

Additionally, I supported two other proposals to improve these programs. The first would exclude veteran compensation from the income guidelines, and the second would exclude the money received from cashing in savings bonds from being counted as income when applying. Both of these bills have passed the House and currently are under consideration in the Senate.

My staff and I can answer any questions you have about these programs, and we also can help you apply.

Who's eligible?

Pennsylvania residents 65 or older

PACE — With a total income of \$14,500 or less for singles and \$17,700 for married couples. Prescriptions are \$6 for generics and \$9 for name-brands.

PACENET — With a total income between \$14,500 and \$23,500 for singles and \$17,700 and \$31,500 if married. After a \$34 monthly deductible, prescriptions are \$8 for generics and \$15 for name-brands.

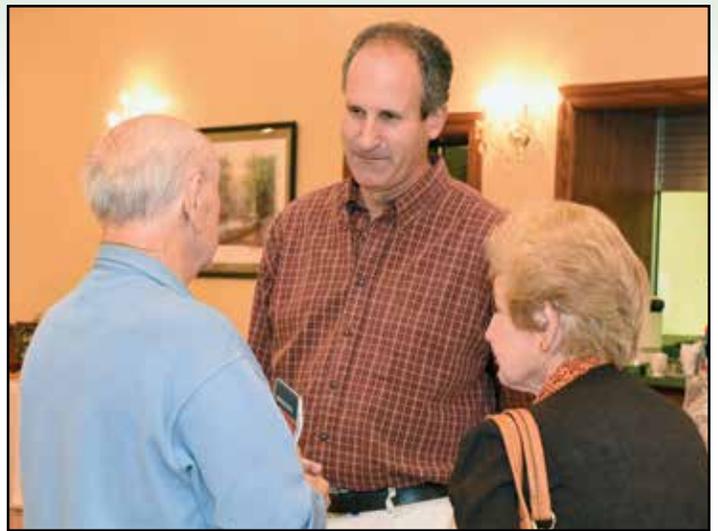


Farmers Market season is near!

The state's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides qualified, low-income seniors with four vouchers a year totaling \$20 that they may exchange for Pennsylvania-grown produce at local farmers' markets. Recipients are given a list of participating farmers and farmers' markets when they receive their checks.

Contact any of my offices for more information.

Petrarca Senior Fairs draw hundreds of guests



Last fall, I held senior fairs in Latrobe and Oklahoma in an effort to bring a variety of information and services available to older Pennsylvanians together under one roof.

Hundreds of seniors attended and learned more about AARP, area libraries, the Westmoreland County Agency on Aging, Attorney General's Office, state police, departments of Health and

Transportation, and Social Security and Veterans administrations, among others.

Attendees also were able to participate in free health screenings and receive flu and pneumonia shots.

I think those who attended enjoyed themselves and learned something new. I hope to hold senior fairs in the future and will let you know about the plans when they are finalized.

Better protection from telemarketer scams

The state's Do Not Call list prevents many telemarketers from calling you, if you're signed up. There are some exceptions to who may call you, including nonprofit organizations and businesses with whom you have an established relationship; however, violations do happen such as the recent scam where callers claim to be from the IRS. (Please remember the IRS does not notify people by phone of issues.)

The Attorney General's Office is required to notify the General Assembly of any investigations and enforcement it takes against telemarketers who violate the law. I have supported a bill that would require the attorney general to make those reports monthly to the Department of Aging if any of the violations involve a consumer 60 or older.

The idea behind this bill is to help ensure that the Department of Aging can coordinate with local area agencies on aging to identify and prevent potential patterns of scams, sweepstakes fraud and other methods of financial exploitation. Financial exploitation is the fastest-growing category of elder abuse in the state. This bill would provide greater protections.

Are you on the Do Not Call List?

You can find out by calling 1-888-777-3406 or visiting www.attorneygeneral.gov. You also may call one of my offices and we can help you find out and sign up for it.

If you are on the Do Not Call List and you receive an unsolicited call from a telemarketer, you may file a complaint with the Bureau of Consumer Protection at 1-800-441-2555.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program now open



The state is currently accepting applications for those wishing to apply for a rebate on their 2015 property taxes or rent.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is open to residents 65 or older; widows and widowers

50 or older; and people with a disability 18 or older. To qualify, homeowners must have a household income of \$35,000 or less; renters qualify if their household income is \$15,000 or less. Applicants only have to count half of their Social Security,

Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier I benefits toward the income limit.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates for qualifying homeowners can boost the total to \$975.

Applications are available online at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling 1-888-222-9190. Residents also can visit one of my offices to obtain the form and for help applying.

The deadline to apply is June 30. Rebates will be distributed beginning July 1.

Council helps state develop policy on long-term care

The Intra-Governmental Council on Long-Term Care was created in 1988 to help the state address issues concerning personal care homes. Over the years, the council has evolved and become a valuable resource and sounding board for the departments of Aging, Health and Human Services on long-term care policy issues. However, the law was never expanded to address these issues.

The new law I supported defines the council's responsibilities to address all areas of long-term care, including institutional care and home-based and community-based services. That includes issues relating to regulations, licensure and financing, access to care, community access and public education, long-term care services models and delivery, and workforce so that the council may continue to be an invaluable resource for the state.

Combating exploitation

Currently, the legal definition of exploitation of an older individual is when a caretaker or other person benefits or gains at the expense of an older adult by forcing the older person's consent to an action or by taking action without that older person's consent or knowledge. A bill I supported and now in the Senate would include those acting under a power of attorney in that definition.

Although current law lists an "other person" who acts against an older adult in the definition, adding the power of attorney description to it would make it clear that a local Area Agency on Aging has the authority to investigate and access records if there is reason to suspect an individual acting under a power of attorney is exploiting an older person or his or her resources.

Creating awareness of prostate cancer

I supported a new law designed to create greater public awareness of the prevalence of prostate cancer and how it is detected, diagnosed and treated.

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in Pennsylvania men. It is estimated that each day, 28 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, and an additional four men will die from it. Yet, the state does not provide prostate cancer information as part of a public health message, and a lack of consensus regarding screening guidelines creates confusion and inconsistent screening rates across the state. But when diagnosed early, prostate cancer survival rates are very high.

Called the Prostate Cancer Surveillance, Education, Detection and Treatment Act, the new law requires the Health Department to develop programs to inform and educate about prostate cancer, create uniform screening guidelines and help male residents access prostate cancer screening, regardless of insurance coverage.

Prostate cancer has the same prevalence in men as breast cancer does in women in the Commonwealth. This policy discussion will help bring this issue in men's health to the forefront.

Safe driver course

Do you want to brush up on your driving skills? Regain confidence when driving? Save 5 percent on your auto insurance?

Visit www.seniorsforsafedriving.com to find a PennDOT-approved Senior Highway Safety Education Program course near you. If there is no classroom course nearby, you can take the course online. According to state law, successful completion of the safe driving course may result in a 5 percent reduction in your auto insurance premium for three years.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Joseph A. Petrarca

220 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055

Website: www.pahouse.com/Petrarca
Email: petrarca@pahouse.net

lpo.jc.0416

My office can help you with:

- Free notary service (no title transfers)
- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Birth and death certificates
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups



CAPITOL OFFICE:
220 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055
(717) 787-5142

DISTRICT OFFICES:
239 Longfellow St.
Vandergrift, PA 15690
(724) 567-6982

620 N. Chestnut St.
Derry, PA 15627
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building
901 Jefferson St.
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 539-7560



I was honored to present the Greater Latrobe Community Chorus with a citation for its 12 years of community enrichment.

FREE booklet of benefits and rights for older Pennsylvanians

Pennsylvania offers plenty of benefits and services to senior citizens. From employment opportunities and health care; to transportation, recreation and leisure; the "Benefits and Rights for Older Pennsylvanians" booklet covers them all.

To receive this comprehensive listing of state programs and services for senior citizens in the Keystone State, please contact one of my district offices.