



State Representative

# STEVE SAMUELSON

## 135th Legislative District

Summer 2018

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## Samuelson bill seeks to eliminate gerrymandering

I introduced House Bill 722 to change how legislative districts are drawn in Pennsylvania, giving the job to an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and taking it out of the hands of party leaders. I introduced this bipartisan legislation along with Rep. Eric Roe (R-Chester).

Our legislation would create an 11-member redistricting panel randomly selected from a list of qualified applicants. Elected officials, staffers, lobbyists and state party officials would NOT be eligible to serve. The bill also calls for public hearings and transparency in the redistricting process.

HB 722 attracted overwhelming support from both Democrats and Republicans. The number of cosponsors got as high as 110 representatives – the highest number of cosponsors of any bill this Session, out of more than 2,500 bills.

For more than a year, however, party leaders in Harrisburg have thrown up roadblocks to passage of this needed reform.

- The bill is in the State Government Committee, but the Chairman of this committee refuses to hold public hearings on HB 722.
- In April – without public notice – the State Government Committee hijacked the bill with a “gut and replace” amendment that removed the reform language and replaced it with a redistricting proposal that would keep power in the hands of party leaders.
- I then introduced a new bill – House Bill 2402 – with the original redistricting reform language from HB 722. This new bill is in the Rules Committee, but the Majority Leader

has not brought it up for a vote.

- In June, the Majority Leader put a redistricting bill (Senate Bill 22) on the House Calendar, and I introduced the proposal for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission in amendment form – but the Leader ultimately decided not to call this legislation or my amendment up for a vote.

While I am frustrated that party leaders in Harrisburg have been determined to block action on redistricting reform, I am very encouraged by the overwhelming public support for our efforts to create an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission.

HB 2402 currently has 100 cosponsors (72 Democrats and 28 Republicans). Fair Districts PA, a statewide grassroots organization, has led an extensive advocacy effort with people from all corners of Pennsylvania demanding reform. More than 20,000 people have attended one of 400 meetings that have been held to advance the proposal.

I will continue to advocate and fight for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and an end to gerrymandering in Pennsylvania. True reform may take time, but I believe we will prevail.



**Rep. Steve Samuelson is surrounded by advocates for redistricting reform as he speaks at a rally to end gerrymandering in Pennsylvania.**



# Take a stand against scams

## Samuelson hosts senior financial fraud and scams forum in Bethlehem

In August, I hosted a Senior Fraud and Scams Forum at the Andrew W. Lizenberger House in Bethlehem. Pennsylvania Secretary of Aging Teresa Osborne and Revenue Secretary Dan Hassell shared important information on how to recognize fraud and scams.

The most frequent report of elder abuse in 2015-16 was financial abuse. Of the more than 24,000 reports that year, nearly 28 percent were for financial abuse of an older adult. In fact, nationally, each year seniors lose \$3 billion to scams and fraud.

Crooks and scammers target older adults for several reasons:

- Seniors tend to own their own homes
- Some seniors have no family to look after them
- Seniors are trusting

One scam that is becoming more prevalent involves a phone call placed to a grandparent by a stranger. The stranger claims to be an attorney, a law enforcement official or a friend who says a grandchild has been arrested or is in legal trouble. The ploy is designed to trick grandparents into wiring money to a faraway city to help a loved one they have been told is in trouble. Be alert for



***Rep. Samuelson makes a point during a discussion with Secretary of Aging Teresa Osborne and Revenue Secretary Dan Hassell.***

this scam. Hang up, and be sure to verify the story before taking action.

But there are many other scams targeting senior citizens. So always remember, if a phone call or email appears suspicious take a moment to think the situation through. If you are still not sure, contact the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office at 1-866-623-2137 or you may contact my office at 610-867-3890.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Deadline extended

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program helps qualified seniors, widows/widowers and disabled adults pay their property tax or rent. The deadline to apply for a 2017 property tax or rent rebate has been extended to December 31, 2018.

Last year, my district staff helped to complete 936 Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications. In 2016, more than 12,000 Northampton County residents received \$4.8 million in property tax or rent rebates.



The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is open to homeowners and renters who are 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people 18 or older with a disability.

Your household income must be \$35,000 or

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 apply for this program.**

If you have any questions, need an application or need assistance if filling out the application please call my district office at 610-867-3890.

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.

Currently, you do not have to report life insurance benefits up to \$5,000 when calculating income.

I have introduced a bill to increase this amount. House Bill 1660 would increase the exemption for life insurance benefits from \$5,000 to \$10,000. With this change, an additional 1,700 people could benefit from the PTRR Program.

My district office staff offers FREE assistance in applying for the Property Tax / Rent Rebate Program. Please contact my office at 610-867-3890, or stop by at 104 E. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018.

You can also obtain an application and apply for free at any Department of Revenue office or the county Area Agency on Aging.



**Rep. Samuelson addresses his House colleagues to recognize Alzheimer's Disease Awareness and Family Caregivers Month.**

## Raising awareness of Alzheimer's and the role of informal caregivers

Last November, the House of Representatives adopted my House Resolution 603 designating November 2017 as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness and Family Caregivers Month in Pennsylvania. I introduced this resolution in honor of the 400,000 Pennsylvanians who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease or related disorders, and their more than 673,000 informal, unpaid caregivers.

Although researchers are working hard to find a cure, we still have our work cut out for us in the battle against Alzheimer's. While we await a breakthrough, our caregivers and patients need our support. Through programs such as the Family Caregiver Support Program, informal caregivers can seek financial support, caregiving assistance and counseling.

For more information on the Caregiver Support Program, or if you have any other questions about our Alzheimer's disease awareness efforts, please call my district office at 610-867-3890.

## It's time to increase PACENET income limits

250,000 seniors can't get the prescription help they need because they earn too much.

House Bill 270, which I co-sponsored with Rep. Frank Farry, makes some important changes to the PACE/PACENET programs.

First and foremost, the bill would increase the income eligibility limits for PACENET from \$23,500 to \$31,000 for a single person, and from \$31,500 to \$41,000 for a married couple. Thousands of seniors have applied to the program, but are not able to receive the prescription help because they earn too much.

Every time PACE/PACENET participants receive a Social Security cost-of-living increase, we exempt that hike from the calculation of income eligibility. This allows seniors who are in the program to stay in the program even if the COLA pushes them over the income limit.

However, this does not help those who have not yet signed up for the program since the income limits for new enrollees have remained the same for nearly 15 years. It is time to raise the PACENET income limits for all seniors.

The current income limits for PACENET were set in 2003. The Department of Aging estimates an additional 250,000 seniors would qualify for PACENET under my proposed income increases, although about 32,000 would likely apply. An estimated 11,000 seniors who have applied for PACENET, but were denied due to their income, would be immediately enrolled with passage of this bill.

The bill also would make some important technical changes to the PACE program:

- Would allow pharmacists to fill partial prescriptions so a participant's prescriptions are refilled all on the same day of the month.
- Would require the Department of Aging to develop a proposal for a medication therapy management program whereby pharmacists would meet with program participants to discuss their prescriptions.
- Would change the focus of the Pharmaceutical Assistance Review Board to an advisory capacity and, under my language, would give seniors a stronger voice by increasing their membership from two to four.

House Bill 270 was unanimously reported from the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee last May, and is awaiting consideration by the full House.



### 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.

#### PACE/PACENET 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 Human Services Medicaid prescription benefit

#### INCOME LIMITS

Act 62 of 2017, which I supported, extends the PACE/PACENET Social Security cost-of-living adjustment moratorium through December 31, 2019. This means that current enrollees won't lose their benefits due to a small Social Security COLA.

#### 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. If you have any questions please give us a call at 610-867-3890.



State Representative  
**STEVE SAMUELSON**  
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# Rep. Steve Samuelson's 2nd Annual Southside Community & Senior Fair

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

### 9:00 AM TO 1:00 PM

St. John's Windish Lutheran Church

617 East Fourth Street

Bethlehem, PA 18015

**YOU'RE  
INVITED!**

**FREE:**

Health Screenings

Door Prizes

Refreshments

And information on services  
for our local senior citizens.

**Plus Rep. Samuelson and his staff will be on hand to  
answer any state-related questions you might have.**

## 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 certificate applications
- Pennsylvania income tax problems
- Problems with the Department of Human Services
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, student aid information, etc.
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the State Capitol for individuals or groups
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints about state road conditions
- Problems or questions about PennDOT
- Disability plates and placards
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies

***Any problem with your state government!***