



State Representative

STEVE SAMUELSON

135th Legislative District

Summer 2019

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Samuelson proposes bill to create Independent Redistricting Commission

Earlier this year, I introduced legislation that would change how election maps are drawn in Pennsylvania in a bipartisan effort to end gerrymandering. Rep. Tom Murt, R-Montgomery County, and I have proposed two bills to establish an independent citizens' commission to draw legislative districts.

House Bill 22 (Murt/Samuelson) would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to create an Independent Redistricting Commission for the once-a-decade reapportionment of State House, State Senate, and Congressional districts. An amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution needs to pass in two consecutive legislative sessions, so the earliest this proposal could be on the ballot is May 2021. If approved by the voters, the new process could be in place for the 2021 round of redistricting. This bill has 87 co-sponsors so far.

House Bill 23 (Samuelson/Murt) would amend state election law to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission for the reapportionment of Congressional districts. Because it is not necessary to amend the state Constitution to address Congressional redistricting, this bill could pass in the current 2019-20 Session and guarantee that an independent commission would be in place by early 2021 for the purpose of drawing Congressional districts. This bill has 92 co-sponsors so far.

Citizens are demanding fair and transparent elections now more than ever, and I am working hard to achieve that goal by proposing true redistricting reform. Thanks to the work of countless, passionate volunteers, the House State Government Committee is holding an informational hearing on September 18 to discuss the legislative and Congressional redistricting processes and proposed reforms, including our legislation. A grassroots citizens' movement led by Fair Districts PA has gathered 66,000 signatures across the state in support of creating an Independent Redistricting

Commission.

Every 10 years, after the U.S. Census is taken, new boundaries are drawn for Pennsylvania

Senate, Pennsylvania House, and Congressional districts to accommodate shifts in population. This process has been consistently abused by a process known as gerrymandering. Quite simply, gerrymandering is the manipulation of the boundaries for political advantage. Over the past few years, our state has been singled out for having some of the worst gerrymandered districts in the country. The Electoral Integrity Project gave Pennsylvania's redistricting process an 11 on a scale of 1 to 100.

Currently, the leaders of the four caucuses, (Democrats and Republicans from the House and Senate) and a fifth non-partisan individual decide state legislative boundaries in a manner that is not transparent. Party leaders also control the process by which Congressional districts are drawn, with the final maps subject to a vote in the House and Senate.

PEOPLE – NOT PARTY LEADERS – SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF REDISTRICTING!

Our legislation would establish an independent citizens' commission to draw the boundaries. It will consist of 11 members who are NOT elected officials, legislative staffers, lobbyists or state party officials. Individuals seeking to serve on the commission would be selected randomly from a list of qualified applicants.

We need a nonpartisan independent redistricting commission to ensure a fair, transparent process. The days of gerrymandering must end.



You're invited
to my

COMMUNITY & SENIOR FAIR

FRIDAY, SEPT. 13, 2019

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Details on Page 4

St. John's Windish Lutheran Church • 617 East Fourth Street • Bethlehem, PA 18015

IN ADDITION, MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE BETHLEHEM SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR, ON THURSDAY, OCT. 3, FROM 10 A.M. TO 1 P.M., AT THE SALVATION ARMY, 521 PEMBROKE ROAD, BETHLEHEM

United Way honors local volunteer

In July, I was pleased to honor local volunteer George Treisner who has given his time and his talents to our community for more than 20 years.

George started as a self-employed electrical contractor. From there he became a popular teacher and represented organized labor through his work with the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

As one of the founding members of the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley's Alliance on Aging, where he served as chair for more than 20 years, George has helped to advance the concept of healthy aging in the Lehigh Valley. His list of volunteer and community service is impressive:

- United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley Board of Directors, representing organized labor through his work with the PSEA;
- Member of the United Way's Impact Council;
- An original Teen Works board member;
- The Children's Coalition;
- Lehigh Valley Partnership;

- Co-chair of the Parent's Council of Muhlenberg College;
- Board of Directors for the Lehigh County Community Partnership for Children and Families;
- Community Services for Children; and
- Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation.



Rep. Samuelson, Darlene Treisner and George Treisner at United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley Age-Friendly Forum July 18, 2019.

George often says that he believes he was put on this earth to make it a better place, and I was glad to thank him for all of his years of service during the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley Age-Friendly Forum, where I was the keynote speaker.

Samuelson helps lead bipartisan effort to push for more transparency in the legislative process

At the beginning of this legislative session, I joined several colleagues in an effort to reform the Rules under which bills are handled in the House of Representatives. Put simply, we are trying to ensure that bills with strong popular support move forward – free from the proverbial Harrisburg gridlock.

My legislation – H.R. 12 – would guarantee that any bill with a majority of House members listed as co-sponsors is immediately sent to the House chamber for a vote.

This resolution is one in a package of proposed Rules changes being promoted by a bipartisan group of legislators

and Fair Districts PA. The proposed changes include measures which would reinstate a 24-hour rule to review amended legislation, provide that any bill with at least 20 co-sponsors from each party be guaranteed a vote in committee, and streamline the process to discharge a bill out of committee.

House Resolution 12 would amend the Rules to ensure that any bill that has the co-sponsorship of a majority of the members of the House should be considered a priority bill and be immediately discharged from committee without any amendment and placed on the House calendar.



This change to the House Rules would prevent a bill that has a majority of the members of the House as co-sponsors from being bottled up in committee and never voted on by the full House. Last session, I introduced redistricting reform legislation which was co-sponsored by 110 representatives – 55 percent of the House. If this proposed rule had been in place last session, this bill would have come directly to the House chamber for consideration. Instead, it received neither a hearing nor a vote, and remained stalled in committee. We need to reform the House Rules to make sure that bills with broad bipartisan support are acted upon by the full House of Representatives.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Deadline Extended to December 31



More people qualify than ever before for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. You may be eligible to receive a state rebate for rent or property taxes you paid in 2018 if you are:

- 65 or older;
- 50 or older and widowed; or
- 18 or older with a permanent disability.

The income limit to qualify for a property tax or rent rebate is \$35,000 or less for homeowners and \$15,000 or less for renters.

You only have to count HALF of your Social Security benefits when calculating your income for this program.

Contact my constituent service office at 610-867-3890 for more information, an application, or FREE assistance with the program.

Senior prescription program expanded



Thousands of additional Pennsylvania seniors are eligible for the PACENET prescription program, thanks to a bipartisan bill I introduced that has become law.

Act 87, signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf last fall, increases seniors' access to the state's prescription drug assistance program (PACENET) by raising the program's income limits to keep pace with rising costs. The law increases the maximum income limit for PACENET to \$27,500 for individuals and \$35,500 for married couples.

This legislation, which I introduced with Rep. Frank Farry of Bucks County, resulted in the first increase in the PACENET income limits in 15 years.

It's estimated this expansion will allow for an additional 17,000 seniors to be eligible for PACENET statewide.

In addition, the new law allows pharmacists to fill partial prescriptions so PACE/PACENET participants' refills can be synchronized for the same day.

If you have any questions, or need assistance applying for PACE/PACENET benefits, please call my Bethlehem office at 610-867-3890, or visit at 104 E. Broad St., Bethlehem.

PACE/PACENET

To be eligible for PACE or PACENET, you must be a senior 65 or older, be a resident of the Commonwealth for at least 90 consecutive days and meet the following income requirements:

PACE income limits*:

- A single person's total income from last year must be \$14,500 or less.
- A married couple's total combined income from last year must be \$17,700 or less.

PACENET income limits*:

- A single person's total income from last year must be between \$14,501 and \$27,500.
- A married couple's total combined income from last year must be between \$17,701 and \$35,500.

*Social Security Medicare Part B premiums are now excluded from income.





State Representative
STEVE SAMUELSON
 104 E. Broad St.
 Bethlehem, PA 18018

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STATE REP. STEVE SAMUELSON'S

3rd Annual COMMUNITY & SENIOR FAIR!



State Representative
STEVE SAMUELSON

Co-sponsored with
 The Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley
 St. John's Windish Lutheran Church

FRIDAY, SEPT. 13, 2019
 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

St. John's Windish Lutheran Church
 617 East Fourth Street • Bethlehem, PA 18015

CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Free Health Screenings • Refreshments
 And information on benefits and services for our local senior citizens
 My staff and I will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about how my office can serve you.

For more information, please contact Rep. Samuelson's office
 (610) 867-3890 • 104 E. Broad St. • Bethlehem, PA 18018

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/PACENET applications
- 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 state government!