



# Frank Burns

State Representative



72nd Legislative District

323 Main Capitol • P.O. Box 202072 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2072 • (717) 772-8056 • Fax: (717) 772-9965  
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 Website: [www.pahouse.com/Burns](http://www.pahouse.com/Burns) • [facebook.com/RepFrankBurns](https://facebook.com/RepFrankBurns) 2014 Senior Newsletter

## Burns votes against massive gas tax increase

Recently, Gov. Tom Corbett signed into law a bill that is supposed to raise \$2.3 billion over five years for roads, bridges and mass transit by uncapping the Oil Company Franchise Tax, which is the tax on wholesale gasoline purchases.

Unfortunately, to raise the money the governor wants, this law significantly increases the gas tax and hikes fees for more than 150 driver-related services.

Rep. Frank Burns voted against that massive tax increase.

***“Pennsylvania has the sixth-highest gas tax in the nation. Our gas prices are 20 cents higher than the national average, according to AAA.”***

***– Rep. Frank Burns***

“Taxpayers cannot afford this incredible expense,” he said. “This law will result in much higher gas taxes, which will be passed down to drivers at the pump. If gas prices increase more than expected, the tax

could be even higher, since the tax is tied to the price of gasoline and the cap has been removed.”

Drivers also will see increased costs for a number of driver’s services, including driver’s licenses, vehicle

registrations and many fines.

“I did not support this bill because I believe it is a bad tax that we cannot afford and it will hurt the people who least can afford it,” Burns said.

### Will PA finally be number 1

Pennsylvania is on track to lead the nation with the highest gas tax and highest gas prices. As of February 2014, Pennsylvania’s gas prices were the 6th highest in the nation – and it’s just the first year of the new, higher tax.

- Hawaii – \$4.033
- California – \$3.702
- Alaska – \$3.679
- Connecticut – \$3.665
- New York – \$3.648
- PENNSYLVANIA – \$3.572**

Of the neighboring states, only New York has higher prices than Pennsylvania.

- Delaware – \$3.446**
- West Virginia – \$3.439**
- Ohio – \$3.433**
- Maryland – \$3.409**
- New Jersey – \$3.288**
- Virginia – \$3.217**

*\*\*Prices reported by GasBuddy*

### Does Cambria County benefit

Of the \$2.4 billion to be generated, Cambria County only will see a fraction of that funding. Most of the funding will go to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

## Protecting PACE/PACENET eligibility for seniors

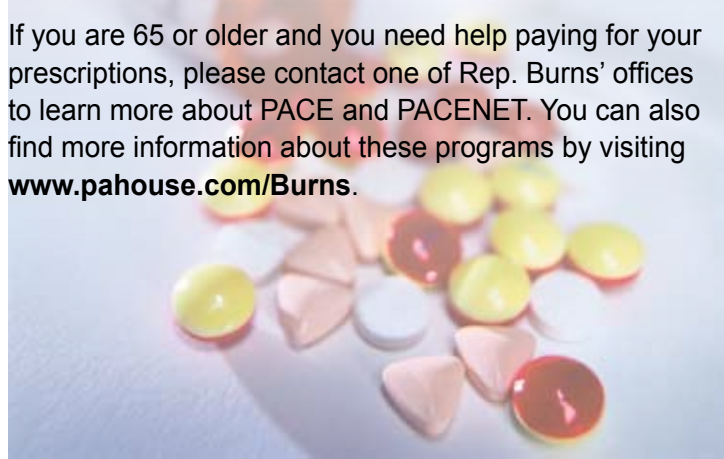
Thousands of Pennsylvania senior citizens will keep their prescription drug coverage under a new law Rep. Frank Burns voted for.

The law maintains eligibility for Pennsylvania seniors in PACE and PACENET if their Social Security cost-of-living adjustment pushes them over the income eligibility limit through 2015.

Rep. Burns said that without this legislative fix, more than 40,000 seniors would have lost their prescription drug coverage because their relatively small cost-of-living increase pushed them over the income limit. And, this could have ended up costing them hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year in prescription benefits.

The law also lets applicants exclude the cost of their Medicare Part B premiums from being counted as income. This change lets an additional 8,200 seniors qualify for PACE or PACENET.

If you are 65 or older and you need help paying for your prescriptions, please contact one of Rep. Burns' offices to learn more about PACE and PACENET. You can also find more information about these programs by visiting [www.pahouse.com/Burns](http://www.pahouse.com/Burns).



## Pennsylvania Lottery to remain in PA

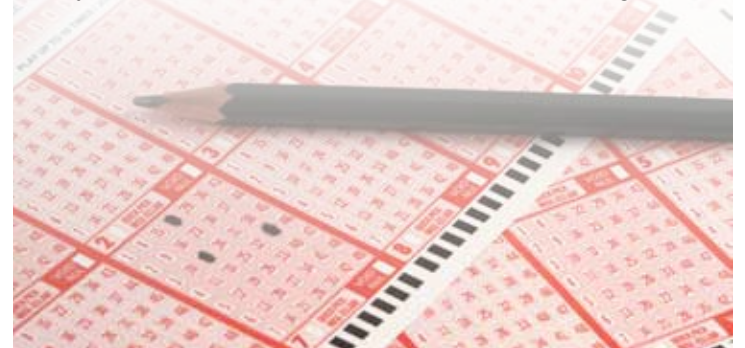


Rep. Frank Burns said he was pleased that Gov. Tom Corbett finally abandoned his plan to sell the Pennsylvania Lottery's management to a British firm when he let the bid proposal expire Dec. 31. The public was opposed to this idea and the state attorney general found the proposal to be unconstitutional.

"It was a bad idea all around, so it is upsetting that the governor wasted millions of dollars – about \$3.5 million in consultant fees – to push his plan. That money would have been better spent providing property tax and rent rebates, or helping more seniors purchase their prescription drugs," Burns said.

The push to privatize the lottery was unsuccessful because of public outcry, and Rep. Burns said the public should be commended for it.

Pennsylvania is the only state that designates all of its lottery proceeds to programs that benefit older residents. Letting the privatization contract expire ensures that the lottery continues to support these worthwhile programs.



## Two bills of concern

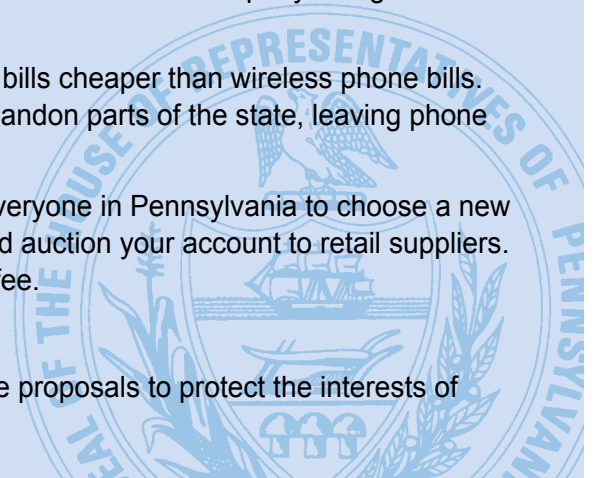
There are two bills making waves in the General Assembly that could pose problems for many Pennsylvanians. One could eliminate telephone land lines and another could allow the state to auction off the company that generates your electricity.

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.

Rep. Burns said that he is keeping a close, watchful eye on both of these proposals to protect the interests of Pennsylvania's seniors and consumers.



# Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications now available

Applications are now available for the annual Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. If you received a rebate last year, your application should come automatically in the mail. Rep. Burns' office also has applications available.

The program provides qualifying senior citizens and other Pennsylvania residents with rebates based on the property taxes or rent they paid the previous year.

The program is open to Pennsylvania residents 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people 18 or older who have a disability. The income limit to qualify is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. ***Applicants must count all sources of income toward the limit, but only half of any Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits toward their total income.***

The maximum property tax or rent rebate for most qualifying Pennsylvania residents is \$650.

**Remember:** There is no charge to apply for this program. If you receive an offer to help you file an application for a fee, please ignore it. Rep. Burns can help you apply for free.

## Burns votes for enhancements to rebate program

The state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is a popular and valuable program for hundreds of thousands of residents.

Rep. Burns is supporting several enhancements to the program. He voted for legislation that would:

- **Permanently extend the program's deadline to Dec. 31.** The program's regular deadline is June 30, but the state regularly extends the deadline until the end of the year. This would make the extension permanent.
- **Double the amount of death benefits that may be exempted when considering income for program eligibility.** Current law exempts the first \$5,000 of death benefits. The bill would increase that amount to \$10,000.
- **Allow an executor to apply for the rebate on behalf of a deceased applicant** if the individual was eligible for the program on the date he or she died. Currently, deceased applicants must have lived the entire year for which their claim is filed.

Since the program's inception in 1971, more than \$5 billion has been distributed to older adults and adults with disabilities. The legislation is currently being considered by the Senate.

Rep. Burns also is supporting legislation to allow certain federal employees who are ineligible for Social Security to exclude half of their Civil Service Retirement System pension when applying for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program already allows people who receive Railroad Retirement Tier I or Social Security benefits to exclude half of that income in determining eligibility for the program. But federal employees, who, because of their hiring date, are ineligible for Social Security, were inadvertently excluded. Rep. Burns said this is an unfair omission that should be corrected.



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2014 Senior Newsletter

## Attention retirees!

Retirees with incomes up to \$19,200 can register their vehicles for an annual fee of \$10, instead of the usual \$36. The necessary forms are available in my constituent service offices.



## FREE Booklet of Benefits and Rights for Older Pennsylvanians

Pennsylvania offers more benefits and services to senior citizens than almost any other state in the nation. From employment opportunities and health care to transportation, recreation and leisure, the "Benefits and Rights for Older Pennsylvanians" booklet contains it all.

To receive this booklet of information about state programs and services for senior citizens in Pennsylvania, contact one of my constituent service offices.