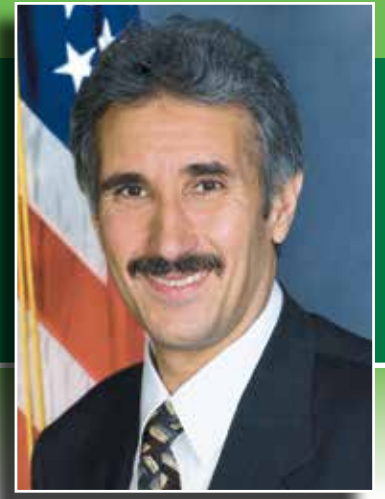


Rep. Chris

Sainato

Senior Report



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Fighting the opioid epidemic

Sainato continues fight to ease burden for grandparents raising grandchildren

I remain committed to my fight against the opioid epidemic; this ongoing crisis is not only taking lives at an alarming rate, it is resulting in a growing number of grandparents having to become the sole caregivers of their grandchildren.

A bill I co-sponsored — (H.B. 1539) that would still protect the rights of the parents, while at the same time, provide a way for grandparents to obtain temporary guardianship and the legal right to make basic, parental decisions, including enrolling a child in school or taking them to the doctor — passed the House and awaits further action in the Senate.

This legislation is crucial in helping children of addicts and making it easier for grandparents to step in and take on a parental role.

In Pennsylvania, approximately 90,000 grandparents are raising more than 235,000 grandchildren because the children’s parents are unable or unwilling to do so, oftentimes because of drug or alcohol dependency issues.

While grandparents are quick to take responsibility of their loved ones, they are also left dealing with a gray area in our legal system. Under current law, they are not eligible for many of the benefits and assistance given to traditional parents or foster parents, which can lead to struggles for grandparents as providers.

This bill would allow grandparents to be loving, supporting caregivers without having to contend with unnecessary legal and monetary struggles.

If you or someone you know is battling a prescription drug or heroin addiction, there is help. Call the state’s helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for information about treatment resources. Your call is completely confidential. The hotline is staffed by trained professionals and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit www.dhs.pa.gov for more information about treatment services available.

Kinship caregivers — grandparents and other relatives raising children younger than 18 — face a variety of emotional, legal and financial challenges. The National Family Caregiver Support Program helps to relieve the caregiver burden by offering qualified primary caregivers up to \$200 per month in reimbursements for approved out-of-pocket expenses. Under special circumstances, there is a potential to receive up to \$500 per month in approved reimbursements. If qualified, the program also provides up to \$2,000 in pre-approved reimbursements to modify the home or purchase assistive devices or technologies.

Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for additional information. You may also visit the Aging Department website at www.aging.pa.gov for more information about programs to help kinship caregivers.



It was a beautiful day at Cascade Park last year for the Eintracht Society’s annual Oktoberfest.



Delicious food and great entertainment are always part of the Greek Festival at St George’s Greek Church in Neshannock Township.

Rebate Deadline Extended

The deadline to apply for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2017 under the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended to Dec. 31, 2018.

The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may also file rebate claims on behalf of claimants who lived at least one day in 2017 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650, although supplemental rebates for certain qualifying homeowners can boost rebates to \$975.

Federal veterans' disability and state veterans' payments are no longer to be included in eligibility income.

PACE and PACENET PROGRAM Guidelines

Pennsylvania's prescription assistance programs for older adults, PACE and PACENET, offer low-cost prescription medication to qualified residents, 65 or older. For more information, call 1-800-225-7223.

ELIGIBILITY

Social Security Medicare Part B premiums are now excluded from income. This has the same effect as raising the income limits by that amount.

PACE and PACENET eligibility is determined by your previous calendar year's income.

PACE

- You must be 65 or older, a Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days prior to the date of application, and you cannot be enrolled in the Department of Human Services' Medicaid prescription benefit.
- 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

Learn to avoid telemarketing scams

Every day across the United States, telephone scammers are at work. With new technologies, scammers can actually call from a number that appears to be a local call. Losses are estimated at \$40 billion a year and the costs are rising. How can you avoid being a victim of these scams?

- Ask for printed material through the mail that includes the company's name, address, phone and charity registration number or business registration number.
- Contact the Attorney General's Office to verify the information sent to you.
- Never send cash through the mail or give it to someone at your door.
- Never reveal your credit card number, Social Security number, or bank account information over the phone unless you initiated the call.

Tell the person that you do not wish to be called again, and record the party calling and the date on a list by the phone. If he or she calls back, or if you have any doubts about the legitimacy of the call, contact the state Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Consumer Protection at 1-800-441-2555.

Put your phone number on the state's Do-Not-Call list, 1-888-777-3406.

Report fraud to the Pa. Attorney General's Elder Abuse Helpline

Senior citizens are favored targets for many kinds of consumer fraud including identity theft, charities, telemarketing and sweepstakes fraud.

Because various state agencies, local law enforcement, criminal investigators and prosecutors work together to resolve cases of elder victimization, it may be difficult to know where to report certain elder abuse concerns.

You may call the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Elder Abuse Helpline toll free at 1-866-623-2137. Well-trained staff will provide help.



I don't think anyone normally wishes to be called an "Old Timer," but the exception is during Old Timers Day at Cascade Park! Can you tell that the theme was "Believe in Magic," with Disney-themed entertainment? This picnic was a huge success and it was an honor for me to once again lead the Grand March.



Did You Know?

You Might be Paying Too Much for Auto Insurance

It's always a good idea to review your auto policy, because a change in your life that impacts when and how much you drive can influence the cost. It's always worth taking a moment to review your current policy whenever a change happens to make sure you aren't paying more than you should.

Here are some things to consider, especially if you're retired:

Driving for Pleasure vs. Commuting: Higher rates are charged for driving in rush-hour traffic every day. If you're no longer working, you shouldn't be paying those extra charges;

Annual mileage: Daily commutes can result in extra miles. Driving fewer miles decreases how much your coverage can cost;

Income loss (wage replacement): Perhaps you bought extra insurance to cover your bills in the event you couldn't work. If you are no longer working, it's extra insurance you don't need to pay for any longer.

Mature drivers and empty nesters: If your children no longer live at home, they shouldn't be on your policy any longer. If all of the drivers on your policy are 55 or older, take a PennDOT-approved mature driver class, and see the reflection in a 5-percent discount on most policies.

While maintaining the appropriate auto insurance is crucial, you shouldn't pay for more than you actually need. The Insurance Department's Consumer Services Bureau is available to answer additional questions or take complaints at 1-877-881-6388.

Also, the Lawrence County Learning Center presents a Seniors for Safe Driving course. It is designed for drivers 55 or older, and is PennDOT-approved. Once completed, attendees will receive a minimum 5-percent discount on their auto insurance premium for three years. Register by phone 1-800-559-4880 or online www.seniorsforsafedriving.com.

Discount Car Registrations

Retirees receiving retirement income up to \$19,200 with a vehicle weighing 9,000 pounds or less can register for an annual fee of \$10, instead of the usual fee. The necessary forms are available in my constituent service office.

Hunting and fishing licenses

Some of the best experiences our state has to offer happen in the great outdoors. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat and Game commissions make it a little easier on the wallet for seniors to fish and hunt.

Individuals 65 or older, who are Pennsylvania residents, may purchase yearly hunting and fishing licenses at reduced rates of \$13.90 for a hunting license and \$11.90 for a fishing license. Lifetime licenses are also available at \$51.90 for hunting or fishing.

You can find more information on how to purchase a fishing license online, the latest stocking guides, fishing

information by your region and much more, by visiting the Fish and Boat Commission's website at www.fishandboat.com. Game news, state game lands maps, and other helpful resources are also available on the Pennsylvania Game Commission's website, www.pgc.pa.gov.

Pennsylvania state parks

Do you enjoy getting away in the great outdoors? Looking for something fun to do with the grandkids? Pennsylvania has 117 state parks that are considered the best in the nation and many include electric sites and modern bathhouses in their campgrounds.

Seniors 62 or older are eligible for a \$4.50 discount off the normal campsite price. You can find your closest state park, prices and other frequently asked questions, as well as make a reservation, at www.dcnr.pa.gov. Reservations can also be made by calling 1-888-PA-PARKS (1-888-727-2757).



It's always a pleasure to see everyone at the New Covenant Presbyterian Church Community Festival.



It was a pleasure to visit the St. Luke AME Church Community Day.



STATE REP. CHRIS SAINATO

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Inside:

- Fighting the opioid epidemic
- PACE/PACENET guidelines
- Avoiding telemarketing scams
- Reduced fees for seniors

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My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Birth and death certificate issues with the Department of Health
- Department of Human Services issues such as food stamps, medical and income assistance
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Issues with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens

Any issue with state government!

Important Numbers

Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection — Investigates consumer complaints. Call 1-800-441-2555.

Attorney General's Health Care Section — Helps with disputes with health insurance companies or medical providers. Call 1-877-888-4877.

Attorney General's Senior Crime Prevention University — Teaches seniors how to avoid becoming a crime or abuse victim. If you would like to attend a Senior Crime Prevention University Program, or have your group host a presentation, please call 717-787-9716.

Pa. Legal Services — Provides listings, by county, of the organizations that provide free or discounted legal services for individuals with low and moderate incomes. Call 1-800-322-7572, or visit www.palegalaid.net.

PennSERVE — Promotes volunteering and community service throughout Pennsylvania for people of all ages and levels of physical ability. Call 717-787-1971 or 866-6-SERVE-U (866-673-7838) or email at pennserve@pa.gov.

Senior LAW Helpline — Provides free legal information, advice and referrals to state residents 60 or older. Call 1-877-888-4877.



I spent some time with the Trinity Episcopal Church Group at the Union Fire Department's annual Balloonquest. Those balloons are always a sight to see!