

REP.                      TANGRETTI                      REMARKS

TO SENIOR CITIZEN GROUP

APRIL 9, 1990

(USUAL GREETINGS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS)

AS MOST IF NOT ALL OF US KNOW BY  
NOW, THIS IS THE YEAR OF THE CENSUS.

AND IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE  
WHO RECEIVED THE CENSUS BUREAU'S  
LONG FORM, YOU MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO  
THINK...AS I WAS... THAT IT WAS DESIGNED  
BY A CONSULTANT FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE  
SERVICE.

THEY WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY MILES  
YOU COMMUTE TO WORK, HOW MUCH IT COSTS  
FOR EACH OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD UTILITIES,  
WHAT YOUR NATIONALITY BACKGROUND IS.  
THINGS                      LIKE                      THAT.

BY THE TIME YOU'RE FINISHED YOU  
HAVE ENOUGH MATERIAL TO WRITE YOUR  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

WHETHER YOU FILLED OUT THE SHORT  
FORM OR THE LONG FORM, I HOPE YOU ALL  
PARTICIPATED IN THE CENSUS.

IT'S GOING TO BE VERY IMPORTANT TO  
US IN MANY WAYS. IT WILL DETERMINE THE  
RE-APPORTIONMENT OF THE STATE  
LEGISLATURE AND THE U.S. CONGRESS.

IT ALSO HELPS THE STATE AND FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT ALLOCATE RESOURCES FOR  
GOVERNMENT SERVICES, INCLUDING SERVICES  
TO SENIOR CITIZENS.

OUR CURRENT DATA ESTIMATES THERE  
ARE 1.7 MILLION PEOPLE IN PENNSYLVANIA  
WHO ARE AGED 65 AND OVER, AND THAT WE  
HAVE THE SECOND HIGHEST SENIOR CITIZEN

POPULATION AFTER FLORIDA.

MOREOVER, THE NUMBER OF SENIOR  
CITIZENS IN PENNSYLVANIA IS GROWING  
-MORE THAN 8 PERCENT BETWEEN 1980  
AND 1987.

*and* AS ASTONISHING AS IT MAY SEEM, THE  
NUMBER OF PENNSYLVANIANS 85 AND OLDER  
JUMPED BY 67 PERCENT DURING THE LAST  
DECADE.

THANKS TO OUR STATE LOTTERY,  
PENNSYLVANIA HAS PERHAPS THE BEST ARRAY  
OF SERVICES FOR ITS OLDER CITIZENS THAN  
ANY OTHER STATE IN THE NATION.

ALL OF YOU NO DOUBT ARE FAMILIAR  
WITH MOST OF THESE PROGRAMS -- PACE  
PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE...PROPERTY TAX  
AND RENT REBATES FOR SENIOR  
CITIZENS...REDUCED RATES FOR PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION...INFLATION

DIVIDENDS...REDUCED COSTS FOR AUTO REGISTRATIONS...SENIOR CITIZEN RATES FOR HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES...THE SERVICES OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING...AND THE STATE CABINET-LEVEL DEPARTMENT OF AGING.

INDEED, PENNSYLVANIA IS NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AS A LEADER IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND OFTEN HAS BEEN WRITTEN UP IN NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS FOR ITS RECORD ON THEIR BEHALF.

THE COMMONWEALTH'S GENEROSITY TOWARD ITS OLDER PEOPLE IS ADMIRABLE IN EVERY WAY AND STEMS FROM OUR DEEPEST CONVICTIONS.

IT SHOULD SURPRISE NO ONE THAT OUR STATE CARES ABOUT ITS OLDER CITIZENS.

PENNSYLVANIA'S CULTURE IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE VALUES OF THE EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME HERE TO WORK IN ITS MINES AND FACTORIES -- AND WHO CARRIED WITH THEM THE TRADITIONS OF FAMILY...AND RESPECT FOR THE AGED.

THOUGH OFTEN LACKING IN EDUCATION, THEY WELL UNDERSTOOD THE COMMANDMENT, "HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER."

AS WITH ANY OTHER AREA OF ACTIVITY, HOWEVER, THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT WE CAN DO. AND GIVEN THE CONDITION OF THE STATE LOTTERY FUND AND LOTTERY REVENUES, WE ARE APPROACHING THOSE LIMITS.

WE MUST KEEP THAT IN MIND AS WE WORK TO DEVELOP NEW INITIATIVES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS.

I KNOW I'VE HAD TO BE MINDFUL OF THAT WITH A BILL I'M INTRODUCING TO HELP SENIOR CITIZENS KEEP THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR THE PACE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM.

THIS BILL WOULD EXEMPT RECENT SOCIAL SECURITY COST OF LIVING INCREASES FROM BEING COUNTED AS INCOME TO DETERMINE IF A PERSON IS FINANCIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR PACE BENEFITS.

I'VE HAD NUMEROUS CONSTITUENTS COMPLAIN, AND RIGHTLY SO, THAT THEY NO LONGER QUALIFY FOR PACE SOLELY BECAUSE OF COST OF LIVING INCREASES IN THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS.

THOUGH MY BILL WOULD ALLOW THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE PACE PROGRAM, IT WOULD NOT STRAIN THE LOTTERY FUND. IT WOULD NOT EXPAND ELIGIBILITY, BUT WOULD SIMPLY RESTORE IT TO THOSE WHO'VE BEEN UNFAIRLY

REMOVED FROM THE PROGRAM.

*and assured they would be removed in the future because of SS increases*

I WANT TO BRIEFLY MENTION TWO OTHER IMPORTANT MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO YOU.

ONE OF THESE IS THE MEDICARE OVERCHARGE MEASURE -- OR, AS WE CALL IT, MOM. THIS BILL, ALREADY APPROVED BY THE HOUSE, WOULD RESTRICT MEDICARE CHARGES TO THE AMOUNTS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS DETERMINED TO BE PROPER FOR VARIOUS TREATMENTS AND SERVICES.

IT'S ESTIMATED THAT MEDICARE PATIENTS PAY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ABOVE THE PRE-DETERMINED RATES FOR THE TREATMENTS THEY RECEIVE...AND MOM WOULD PUT A STOP TO IT.

*in Pa. alone \$50-72 mil in 1988*

~~THE OTHER IS THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT, WHICH THE HOUSE WILL BE VOTING IN A FEW WEEKS.~~

A LAW THAT JUST TOOK EFFECT LAST YEAR HAS ALREADY BEEN USED BY THE STATE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. IT IS THE OLDER ADULTS PROTECTIVE SERVICES ACT.

ABUSE OF THE ELDERLY IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM, BUT OFTEN A HIDDEN ONE TOO. SADLY, THE ELDERLY ARE EASY VICTIMS BECAUSE THEY ARE OFTEN DEPENDENT ON OTHERS FOR THEIR DAILY NEEDS.

THE OLDER ADULTS PROTECTIVE SERVICES ACT SHIELDS WHISTLEBLOWERS FROM LIABILITY AND RETALIATION, AND IT REQUIRES SPEEDY INVESTIGATION OF SUSPECTED CASES OF ABUSE. SEVERAL NURSING HOMES HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATED THIS YEAR FOR POSSIBLE ABUSE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE NEW LAW.



THE SAD THING IS THAT ABUSE OF THE ELDERLY IS SUCH AN UNDER-REPORTED PROBLEM. THE GOOD THING IS THAT THE STATE HAS RECOGNIZED THIS AND IS NOW BEING MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE IN ITS INVESTIGATIONS.

ANOTHER BILL INTRODUCED BY ALLEN KUKOVICH IS ONE THAT WOULD REVISE PENNSYLVANIA'S GUARDIANSHIP LAW. THE CURRENT LAW ALLOWS OLDER PEOPLE TO BE STRIPPED OF THEIR BASIC RIGHTS --- THE RIGHT TO VOTE, MARRY, CHOOSE WHERE TO LIVE -- WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF LEGAL REPRESENTATION AND WITHOUT A REQUIREMENT THAT THEY BE PRESENT AT THEIR OWN GUARDIANSHIP HEARING.

AFTER A PERSON IS DECLARED INCOMPETENT, THERE IS NO MONITORING SYSTEM TO MAKE SURE THAT THE GUARDIAN IS DOING HIS TASK WELL ENOUGH.

IF THE NEW BILL IS PASSED IT WOULD PERMIT LIMITED GUARDIANSHIP FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS BUT GENERALLY CAN STILL CARE FOR THEMSELVES, AND IT WOULD REQUIRE GUARDIANS TO FILE REGULAR REPORTS WITH THE COURT.

I'M SURE MOST OF YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PACE PROGRAM -- PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE CONTRACT FOR THE ELDERLY. SINCE IT STARTED SEVERAL YEARS AGO, IT HAS BEEN ONE OF THE STATE'S MOST SUCCESSFUL AND POPULAR PROGRAMS.

ON JULY 1, A NEW LAW TOOK EFFECT WHICH REQUIRES THAT GENERIC DRUGS BE DISPENSED THROUGH THE PACE PROGRAM, UNLESS THE DOCTOR SPECIFICALLY ASKS FOR A BRAND-NAME DRUG.

Another aspect of the PACE program that we didn't mention earlier is the requirement <sup>posed</sup> last <sup>session</sup> year about the use of generic drugs.

THESE GENERIC DRUGS ARE EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE BRAND-NAME EQUIVALENTS, BUT MUCH CHEAPER. AS A RESULT, YOU WILL GET THE SAME MEDICINE AND THE STATE WILL SAVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR, AND HELP TO ENSURE THAT THE PACE PROGRAM REMAINS FINANCIALLY HEALTHY.

*HB 2398 -  
reduce age from  
65-60 - to  
lifetime  
income.*

HOWEVER, ~~SOME SENIOR CITIZENS WHO USED TO TAKE PART IN THE PACE PROGRAM NO LONGER CAN, BECAUSE THE COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT TO THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY HAS RAISED THEIR INCOME BEYOND THE PROGRAM'S CUT-OFF POINTS.~~

~~UNDER CURRENT LAW, YOUR INCOME MUST BE LESS THAN TWELVE THOUSAND DOLLARS, OR FIFTEEN THOUSAND IF YOU ARE MARRIED, IN ORDER TO BENEFIT FROM THE PACE PROGRAM.~~

A BILL THAT IS CURRENTLY IN THE HOUSE WOULD ALLOW THIS INCOME LIMIT TO BE ADJUSTED UPWARD EACH YEAR, AGAIN BASED ON THE SOCIAL SECURITY COLA. THIS WILL LET SENIOR CITIZENS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS THAT THEY HAVE COME TO COUNT ON.

THERE ARE TWO OTHER BILLS PENDING IN THE HOUSE WHICH ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO SENIOR CITIZENS, BUT THAT I THINK YOU'LL BE INTERESTED IN.

THE FIRST IS A PROPOSAL TO EXPAND THE 9-1-1 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM TO ALL OF PENNSYLVANIA. RIGHT NOW, IT IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO ABOUT HALF THE STATE'S RESIDENTS, MOSTLY IN THE LARGER CITIES.

IF WE CAN EXPAND 9-1-1 TO EVERYONE, THERE WILL BE A MUCH GREATER SAFETY MARGIN FOR FIRE, POLICE, AND AMBULANCE CALLS.

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THE LAST BILL I WANT TO MENTION IS ONE THAT WOULD REQUIRE CONSUMER CONTRACTS TO BE WRITTEN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE, MAKING THEM EASIER TO READ AND UNDERSTAND.

NOT ONLY WOULD CONTRACTS HAVE TO BE WRITTEN IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE AND AVOID COMPLICATED CROSS-REFERENCES, BUT THE TYPE SIZE WOULD HAVE TO BE LARGE ENOUGH AND THE INK DARK ENOUGH TO READ EASILY.

THIS WOULD BENEFIT ALL CONSUMERS, BUT ESPECIALLY SENIOR CITIZENS, BY MAKING IT EASIER TO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SIGN YOUR NAME TO.

I THINK I'VE TALKED LONG ENOUGH, BUT IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER THEM. YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ALL THE BILLS I'VE TALKED ABOUT FROM MY OFFICE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR BEING SUCH A KIND AUDIENCE.

*District  
office  
services  
Bus Trip?*

REP. THOMAS TANGRETTI

RECENT LEGISLATION OF INTEREST TO ELDERLY

AUGUST 16, 1989

I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE TODAY TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT SOME OF THE ISSUES AFFECTING THE ELDERLY IN PENNSYLVANIA TODAY.

WITH 1.7 MILLION SENIOR CITIZENS, THIS STATE IS SECOND ONLY TO FLORIDA IN THE PERCENTAGE OF ITS RESIDENTS WHO ARE OVER 65, AND THE NUMBER OF OLDER PEOPLE HAS INCREASED IN 65 OUT OF 67 COUNTIES SINCE 1980.

BUT UNLIKE FLORIDA, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S SENIOR CITIZENS HAVE LIVED HERE FOR MOST OF THEIR LIFE. YOU WENT TO SCHOOL, WORKED, AND RAISED YOUR FAMILIES HERE, AND NOW YOU ARE SPENDING YOUR RETIREMENT HERE.

THIS LIFELONG COMMITMENT OF YOURS IS WHAT HAS MADE PENNSYLVANIA A GREAT STATE. THE WORK YOU DID IN THE PAST WAS THE FOUNDATION OF THE TODAY'S ECONOMIC VITALITY.

AND FOR ALL THAT WORK, YOU DESERVE THE RECOGNITION AND THANKS OF THE STATE. SO FAR, THE BEST WAY WE HAVE FOUND OF ACKNOWLEDGING THE DEBT WE OWE TO OUR SENIOR CITIZENS HAS BEEN TO DO ALL WE CAN TO ASSURE THEIR FINANCIAL SECURITY AND GOOD HEALTH.

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT BEGAN THIS COMMITMENT WITH HIS NEW DEAL, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WITH THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM. HERE IN PENNSYLVANIA, GOVERNOR GEORGE EARL BEGAN THE LITTLE NEW DEAL, WHICH COPIED MANY OF ROOSEVELT'S PROGRAMS AT THE STATE LEVEL.

THESE PROGRAMS HAVE GROWN OVER THE YEARS, AND NEW ONES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO HELP SERVE PENNSYLVANIA'S SENIOR CITIZENS. THIS YEAR IS NO DIFFERENT. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS CURRENTLY CONSIDERING A NUMBER OF BILLS WHICH ARE OF INTEREST TO SENIOR CITIZENS, AND I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES NOW TO TELL YOU ABOUT THEM.

THE HOUSE PASSED A NUMBER OF BILLS IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF JUNE JUST BEFORE ITS SUMMER RECESS. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THE MEDICARE OVERCHARGE MEASURE, BETTER KNOWN BY ITS INITIALS AS "MOM".

I CO-SPONSORED THIS BILL, WHICH REQUIRES THAT REASONABLE RATES FOR WORK DONE BY HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS BE ACCEPTED AS PAYMENT IN FULL FOR ALL SERVICES.



THESE RATES ARE SET BY THE  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THROUGH MEDICARE.

ACCORDING TO SOME ESTIMATES,  
MEDICARE PARTICIPANTS PAY OVER SIXTY  
MILLION DOLLARS EACH YEAR IN EXCESSIVE  
COSTS, BECAUSE A SMALL MINORITY OF  
HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS CHARGES MORE THAN  
WHAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DETERMINES  
IS REASONABLE FOR THE SERVICE.

THIS PRACTICE PUTS A HEAVY BURDEN ON  
THOSE WHO ARE LEAST ABLE TO AFFORD IT --  
POOR AND ELDERLY MEDICARE PATIENTS. IT  
PREVENTS SOME SENIORS FROM GETTING  
MEDICAL CARE WHEN THEY NEED IT, PUTTING  
THEMSELVES AT GREAT RISK.

THE MOM BILL IS INTENDED TO END  
THIS UNFAIR SITUATION. I HOPE THAT IT  
WILL BE APPROVED QUICKLY BY THE SENATE  
IN THE FALL SO THAT IT CAN BECOME THE  
LAW OF THE STATE.

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A NEW BILL WHICH I STRONGLY SUPPORT, WOULD INCREASE THESE INCOME LIMITS ANNUALLY BY THE SAME AMOUNT AS THE SOCIAL SECURITY COLA.

THIS WOULD BENEFIT ELDERLY WHO ARE NEAR THE CUT-OFF POINTS. THEY WOULD NOT BE PENALIZED FOR GETTING A SLIGHTLY LARGER SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK, AND THEY CAN CONTINUE TO GET THE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS THEY NEED AT VERY LOW COST TO THEM.

THERE IS SIMILAR LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ACCOMPLISH THE SAME THING IN THE AREA OF PROPERTY TAX AND RENT REBATES.

PENNSYLVANIA OFFERS REBATES OF UP TO \$500 TO SENIOR CITIZENS ON PROPERTY TAX AND RENT PAYMENTS. TO QUALIFY FOR THE REBATES YOU MUST HAVE A HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF LESS THAN \$15,000.

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