

S: SENIOR. 057

Rep. Tangretti Remarks

Senior Citizen Group

Aug. 19, 1992

(Usual Greetings and Acknowledgements)

Thank you for your kind invitation.

I'm delighted to be here with a group whose generation has given so much to our community, to our state and to our nation.

Yours is the generation that overcame the Great Depression of the 1930s... that fought and won the war against dictatorship in the 1940s... that kept the flame of democracy alive during the years when Communism was on the march... and the generation that built the greatest period of prosperity we've ever known and still enjoy today.

Your generation has made our nation the leader of the world...the place the world looks to for its advances in science, in culture and the arts, and for a system of government and economics that...though not perfect...is still the best this planet has to offer.

It may well be that history will describe the past 40 or 50 years as America's Golden Age, and it will be because your generation made it so and established a solid foundation for the future.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I'm pleased to say, is the leader among states in acknowledging the sacrifices its prior generations have made to create our present well being.

That was the guiding principle behind the establishment of our lottery-funded senior citizen programs in the early 1970s.

No other state has caught up with us, or is anywhere near us, in the services that are directed to older citizens.

And I'm happy about that because I'm also approaching the time when I can qualify for some of the compensations that aren't available to younger folks -- like those senior citizen discounts on hotel rooms and rental cars and some of the other benefits.

I know I'm reaching that point because one of my younger friends was telling me the other day he's taken up weight lifting as a physical fitness exercise.

I told him I'm getting to the age where the only weight lifting I do anymore is when I stand up.

We in the legislature aren't just sitting on past accomplishments for the state's senior citizens.

Next to children and youth, there's probably not a single segment of the population that receives the attention and interest of the legislature as do the senior citizens. And that's as it should be.

We're working to strengthen and improve the state's lottery programs and guarantee their solvency for years and generations to come.

Pennsylvania's lottery is the only one in the country that dedicates all of its profits to programs benefiting senior citizens.

When we return to sessions in Harrisburg next month, the PACE prescription plan will be at the top of the legislature's agenda.

As most of you know, PACE subsidizes the cost of prescription drugs for nearly 400,000 of our older citizens.

The PACE cardholder pays the first six dollars of the prescription and the state lottery fund pays the rest.

The PACE rescue plan is designed to offset the rapidly rising cost of drugs and the slow growth of lottery sales that are putting PACE in a financial bind.

We want the drug companies to rebate more of the drug costs to the state as a large volume buyer.

And we want to expand the use of generic substitutes where they provide appropriate and effective treatment that is equivalent to the brand name drug.

Equally important, we want to mandate that drug companies who raise their prices higher than the rate of inflation must give the state an additional rebate.

What happened last year when we received the rebates, some drug companies raised their prices by amounts greater than the rebate, and the net effect was that the PACE program lost money.

To ensure the solvency of the fund,
we need to have this inflation
protection.

And our senior citizens
whose lives depend on these costly
prescriptions need it as well.

In addition to the problems with
PACE and the lottery fund, we passed
this year the Living Will law.

This new law gives individuals the
means to determine in advance whether
they will undergo extraordinary and
costly medical treatment if they become
terminally ill and the treatment is
merely prolonging existence and draining
their financial resources.

That same law, by the way, revised the statutes on guardianship.

The new statute will allow impaired individuals to retain control over many aspects of their lives and protect them from all kinds of abuses -- legal, physical, psychological and financial -- that had occurred under the old guardianship laws.

We've also eliminated the widow's tax on modest estates held in joint ownership and corrected a technical flaw passed in the state budget that would have counted Social Security in determining whether a person is required to pay the state income tax.

I'm happy to say that I was one of a small group of legislators who fought to correct the social security mistake when many were content to let it stand out of fear it would upset the state budget.

And even though it's an issue that Congress must solve, I want you to know that the Pennsylvania House has been pressing the Congress to correct the disparities in Social Security benefits for Notch Year babies...those born between 1917 and 1926.

And now it looks as though there's some progress with the introduction in Congress of legislation to correct the mistakes made in the 1977 Social Security reform legislation as it affected those born after 1916.

In closing, let me remind you that often legislation is drafted and introduced because of a single phone call or personal conversation.

With that in mind, I wholeheartedly encourage you to contact me, or stop by the office, with any question or comment you may have.

One of the pleasures of my job is that you can take a problem affecting a single individual and turn it into a solution that will help thousands of people.

Your thoughts, ideas and suggestions are important to me. they are important to me because they are important to you. And maybe from your individual concern will come the added satisfaction of helping improve the lives of many others.

-Bus Trips
Muri Gallomax
W.C.
Supple Budget
Albert
1/30/60