

DOUG REICHLEY

For

STATE HOUSE

Today I am calling upon the General Assembly to pass Senate Bill 1376 which would have an immediate effect of making prescription drugs more affordable to Pennsylvania's senior citizens. This bill, which was originally introduced by Senator Mowery of Cumberland County, and co-sponsored by our own Senator Dent, would allow thousands of older Pennsylvanians on fixed incomes to enjoy some relief from the spiraling costs of many of the medications they need on a frequent basis. This bill has another bonus to it – it would not cost the taxpayers of Pennsylvania one dime more in state spending or increase taxes in any way.

As you know, Pennsylvania currently provides limited pharmaceutical assistance to qualified residents who are 65 years or older. Under the terms of the PACE program, the state picks up the entire cost of prescription drugs and insulin supplies after a mandatory \$6.00 co-payment is paid. However, the PACE program is limited to those individuals with annual incomes of \$14,000 or less, and older married couples with incomes of \$17,200. An additional program, PACENET, was expanded last year to raise the income eligibility requirements to allow individual seniors with a maximum income of \$17,000 and couples with incomes up to \$20,200 to qualify for subsidized prescription care with a low co-payment fee after a \$500 deductible had been met. Both the PACE program, and the supplemental PACENET program are funded from lottery proceeds, with additional funds being contributed from Pennsylvania's share of the Tobacco Litigation Settlement.

Senator Mowery and Senator Dent's bill would direct the State Department of Public Welfare to apply to participate in the federal Pharmacy Plus program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. By filing this application, Pennsylvania would immediately be able to offer less expensive prescription drugs and insulin supplies to older Pennsylvanians whose income levels do not allow them to currently join in the PACE and PACENET programs. The bill would allow an older individual with an income up to \$17,200 and married couples with an annual income up to \$23,220 to qualify for the subsidized drug prices. By doing so, the legislation will have a beneficial outcome for those senior citizens with low to moderate incomes who are currently kept out in the cold because of eligibility restrictions.

This legislation will have a positive effect immediately for our older residents and the State Senate should take up this bill as soon as possible to expedite bringing relief to older Pennsylvanians. As I stated before, this legislation has the added incentive for passage in that the application for the federal waiver does not cost the taxpayers of Pennsylvania a single dime in extra expenditures of the state budget or raise taxes in any form in order to pay for the program. If elected in November, the senior citizens of the 134th District should know they will not have a better friend or a stauncher defender than Doug Reichley, and I ask for your support in the coming election.