

2008 Pennsylvania, PA House District 167

Candidates:

Carol Palmaccio, Democrat
Duane Milne, Republican

Questions:

[Electricity Deregulation](#)
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Candidates were asked to check either the support or oppose boxes.

Supports Opposes The candidate chose not to mark a box

ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION

QUESTION: Do you support or oppose legislation that will ensure that standard electric service is provided at rates that are cost-based and reasonable?

- AARP supports
- Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
- Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

In the hope of encouraging lower prices, Pennsylvania adopted a law restructuring the state's utility industry to allow consumers to purchase electric services from competing suppliers, rather than through the traditional regulated monopoly. During the transition period to a competitive market, the state capped residential rates charged by the existing utilities. Deregulation has failed to produce any of the benefits its supporters predicted. Rates in Pennsylvania are predicted to **rise by 50%** once price caps are lifted. Similar price increases have been seen in other states with deregulated electricity markets. AARP believes that Pennsylvania should adopt restructuring reforms that are based on a portfolio of diverse contract terms and services, integrating energy efficiency and renewable resources as appropriate to ensure that standard electric service (known as Standard Offer Service) are affordable, available and reliable.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

Price-caps and deregulation are complicated issues. We need to work to reform our energy industry to promote lower cost and affordable energy solutions, as well as to focus on renewable energy sources. As State Representative I would work to find solutions to our energy needs in a way that is cost effective and reasonable. People should not be left alone to face the dramatic price increases of electricity and I will support electricity restructuring reform legislation.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:

Retirees on fixed incomes in particular need to be provided some cushion against price spikes after the rate caps are lifted. I support measures, such as requiring utilities to provide smart meters that allow consumers to reduce their electricity demand at peak times, the most expensive time to use electricity. I believe we should provide incentives, through state rebate and tax credits, to allow consumers to replace older appliances with the new energy efficient models as well as upgrade to windows and doors that conserve energy better. It is critical that the state develop an alternative energy market, based on solar, wind and geo-thermal, to increase the availability of energy sources that are less expensive than traditionally generated electricity.

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LOTTERY FUND AND HOME-AND-COMMUNITY BASED CARE

QUESTION: Do you support or oppose using lottery revenues to expand existing home-and-community based care programs offered by local Area Agencies on Aging?



AARP supports



Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports



Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

The Pennsylvania Lottery was established to generate funds to benefit programs for the Commonwealth's older residents. Since 1972, when its first game went on sale, the Pennsylvania Lottery has contributed more than \$17.4 billion to a wide variety of programs. Recently, because of new lottery offerings and changes in some of the programs the lottery supports such as PACE and the property tax/rent rebate program, the lottery has shown a significant surplus. Part of this surplus has been used for the long-term care Medicaid program, which funds mainly nursing home care, while another lottery program that provides home and community based care services through local Area Agencies on Aging has not seen an increase in funding.

AARP strongly supports the expansion of home-and-community based care services as an alternative to nursing home care. AARP believes lottery revenues should be used to expand existing lottery funded home-and-community based care programs instead of being diverted into the Medicaid long-term care program.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

Home-and-community based care options are a valuable asset to providing quality care for the older citizens of our community. While Medicaid and nursing home care are important aspects of our society, many residents would prefer to have more options than nursing home care. I would, as State Representative, work to expand home-and-community based care options, and would consider diverting a larger portion of the lottery surplus towards home-and-community based care.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:




My support for this particular approach fits with my general belief that our society should maximize “aging in place” opportunities for seniors. Long term care policy in general should be rebalanced to put more focus on home and community-based care and less emphasis on traditional nursing homes. Maximizing home and community-based care opportunities means funding this approach as much as possible. This type of care is what our seniors prefer and, in my view, deserve. There are numerous benefits for the seniors themselves of being able to remain in their own homes as long possible. It is also better for the state because home and community-based care is generally a more economical use of limited tax dollars than traditional nursing homes.

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

QUESTION: In the face of escalating costs, how would you reform the state’s health care system to make it available, affordable and accessible for every Pennsylvanian?

Encourage employers to offer/expand coverage.

-  AARP supports
-  Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
-  Duane Milne (Republican) supports

Subsidize the cost of private coverage for un-/underinsured.

-  AARP supports
-  Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
-  Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

There are over 700,000 Pennsylvanians who are without health insurance in Pennsylvania. Various proposals have been made in the General Assembly this year to help more Pennsylvanians obtain health insurance and to ensure that insurance is more affordable for individuals and for businesses. AARP Pennsylvania supports measures to achieve access to affordable health care coverage for all individuals, an approach that would address the needs of those without public or private insurance or

those at risk of losing coverage. Adequate health care coverage allows patients to receive essential treatment, including preventive care that can save the state millions of dollars.

AARP Pennsylvania supports incremental reforms that significantly improve coverage options for those without public or private insurance or those at risk of losing coverage. These reforms include encouraging employers to offer and expand coverage, and subsidizing the cost of private coverage for those who are uninsured, underinsured or at risk of losing coverage.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

The amount of people without healthcare is a staggering burden on our society, and one that individuals should never have to handle. Affordable, quality healthcare should be available to everyone. I strongly believe and would work hard for both the expansion of health care coverage through employers, as well as the state subsidization of private coverage for the under and uninsured. By heading off medical problems early, serious ailments can be prevented and the overall cost on society can be kept to a minimum. It is essential that a structure be provided to deliver crucial medical services to every person in our communities.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:

The health care system must be transformed from the status quo to one more preventive focused. An emphasis on preventive care will save millions of dollars a year that then could be invested in health care coverage for those in need. Employers should be encouraged to offer more coverage for employees by granting business tax credits to those businesses which do so. The state also should reform antiquated insurance regulations. Additionally, through public-private partnerships with the state, private companies should offer a basic insurance plan, subsidized by the state, that takes into account the income level of the individual applying for the plan, and sets the premium at a level that is proportionately reasonable given the individual's income level.

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PROPERTY TAX

QUESTION: What do you propose to do to lower the property tax burden on older Pennsylvanians yet still provide support for our schools?

Broaden the method of financing public education

- AARP supports
- Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
- Duane Milne (Republican) supports

Reduce burden of property taxes

- AARP supports
- Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
- Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

As the Commonwealth's support for public education has fallen to a statewide average of approximately 35% of a school district's budget, property taxes have become the main source of funding for Pennsylvania's schools. Disparities in funding across Pennsylvania mean that some school districts rely on local funding, mainly property taxes, for over 80% of the district's budget. AARP believes we should broaden our method of financing public education, taking some of the burden off the regressive property tax, which is the single-most burdensome tax for many low-income and older people, and shifting to less regressive taxes, which are better correlated with the ability to pay.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

Property taxes pose a complicated problem. As State representative I would never sacrifice the quality of education to lower taxes. The state government has become too willing to apply the easy fix of local property taxes to remedy the much larger problem of receding state support and increasing costs. We need to take full advantage of the tax on gaming revenues we were promised when the industry moved in. It is not a permanent fix, but it may lighten the burden. I am also committed to searching for a more fair way to distribute the tax burden that must inevitably fall locally. Funding for public education is too important to be an afterthought, it is time our legislature made Property Tax Reform a priority, in order to insure the necessary funds remain available to prepare the next generation for the challenges life presents.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:

Seniors should be able to enjoy retirement without excessive worry that regressive property taxes will force them from their homes or undermine their quality of life. Peace of mind about this matter should be considered an earned benefit of being a senior in Pennsylvania. To achieve this, the property tax/rent rebate program should be expanded significantly to give seniors more relief from property taxes. I also support legislation that would cut seniors' property taxes in at least half. The state can reduce a lot of the pressure to raise taxes at the local level by taking the state's share of education funding from the current 35% and raising it back to the traditional goal of giving the state cover 50% of local education budgets.

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CONSUMER PROTECTION

QUESTION: Would you support or oppose the creation of an Insurance Consumer Advocate?



AARP supports



Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports



Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

Insurance products have become increasingly complex and expensive. Currently, the Department of Insurance is charged with both regulating the insurance industry and protecting consumers, putting them at odds with both groups on certain issues. AARP supports the creation of an Insurance Consumer Advocate within the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office that would function similar to the Public Utility Commissions Office of Consumer Advocate and represent the interests of the consumer in hearings.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

Though I am hesitant to create another level of bureaucracy in our government with the creation of yet another office, this is one that I believe is crucial. Just as a lawyer does not make the laws, but functions within them, so to should there be an advocate for consumer interests, independent of the body creating the rules. When disaster strikes, Pennsylvanians are left at the mercy of the insurance companies, and they deserve an advocate who is strictly on their side.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:

Attempting both to regulate an industry and to protect consumers' interests is a difficult balancing act, with an inherent potential for conflict of interest. As a reform, I am advocating for separating these two responsibilities. To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, the consumer advocate function should be removed from the Insurance Department and shirred elsewhere in state government, such as to the Attorney General's Office. Given how important insurance products are to citizens, it is critical that citizens have confidence that their interests are being properly looked out for and protected in the insurance industry. Separating out the consumer advocate function from the Insurance Department may also contribute to some slowdown in the rapidly escalating price of insurance products in the state.

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WINTER UTILITY SHUT-OFFS AND LIHEAP FUNDING

QUESTION 1: Do you support or oppose requiring utility companies to get PUC approval before cutting off service to residential customers in the winter months?

- AARP supports
- Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
- Duane Milne (Republican) supports

QUESTION 2: Do you believe Pennsylvania should contribute state funds to the LIHEAP budget?

- AARP supports
- Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) supports
- Duane Milne (Republican) supports

AARP RESPONSE:

Home energy costs make up a considerable portion of household budgets. Exceedingly volatile natural gas, electricity and fuel oil prices in recent years have significantly increased energy costs facing many consumers. Older Americans are particularly vulnerable to rapid increases in energy prices. Older low-income households spend a higher percentage of total income on energy costs than do other households. AARP supports state programs to address energy affordability including bill payment assistance programs for low-income residential customers; automatic enrollment of electric and natural gas customers into assistance programs; and prohibitions on utilities from disconnecting or refusing to reconnect electric or natural gas service to low-income households during times when weather conditions threaten health and safety.

Carol Palmaccio (Democrat) RESPONSE:

The health and safety of the citizens of our community should and will be my first priority as State Representative. I support requiring utility companies to get PUC approval in winter before being allowed to cut-off services putting the health and safety of those households at risk. I also believe that the state should support programs that help to manage energy costs for low-income families, including contributing funds to the LIHEAP budget. We have to take care of our citizens first, in order to keep our community strong.

Duane Milne (Republican) RESPONSE:

Utility shut-offs should not occur during winter months for seniors who truly cannot pay their heating bills. There should be established, state-certified procedures for rendering this determination (inability to pay), and then help can be arranged for those seniors. This concern highlights the importance of the LIHEAP program. This program helps seniors and others who experience difficult times during winter months when heating bills can be extraordinary high. The potentially most vulnerable part of our population cannot be expected to make it through the winter without adequate heat. I have supported fully funding the LIHEAP program in the past and will continue to do so in the future.