

2008 Pennsylvania, PA House District 74

Candidates:

Camille “Bud” George, Democrat
Richard Hansel, Republican

Questions:

[Electricity Deregulation](#)

[Lottery Fund & Home/Community Care](#)

[Health Care Reform](#)

[Property Tax](#)

[Consumer Protection](#)

[Winter Utility Shut-Offs & LIHEAP Funding](#)

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

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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) is affordable, available and reliable.

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support electricity restructuring reform legislation.

As one of 28 House members opposing deregulation in 1996, I maintain that deregulation is one of the biggest hoaxes ever foisted upon consumers. I am the author of Special Session House Bill 54, which would extend the electric-generation rate caps by another two years as we search for solutions, including phasing in the rate increases, offering

rebates to ratepayers and having Pennsylvania serve as the wholesale power purchaser. I am also the author of House Bill 2200, which would require utilities to pursue a least-cost power portfolio and reduce overall and peak demand. The power market is broken as generating companies are showing record profits. How many red flags must go up before Pennsylvanians stand up and demand better rates and treatment?

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:

Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)

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



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports

Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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.

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support using Lottery funds to expand home and community based options. However, the political realities in Harrisburg cannot be discounted. I would not want to throw Medicaid recipients to the wolves and I don't think AARP would want that either. Faced with a \$2 billion funding shortfall from Washington DC over recent years and conservatives disingenuous stereotyping of all “welfare” spending gave responsible lawmakers very little leeway for finding better solutions.

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:

Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)

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



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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



AARP supports



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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.

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support encouraging employers to offer/expand coverage.

I support subsidizing the cost of private coverage for the un-/underinsured.

America's health-care system is broke and needs massive changes, not just incremental ones. We're paying twice as much as countries that insure all its citizens and receive considerably less back in terms of favorable health outcomes. A single-payer system offers the best hope to our citizens and businesses. I support Cover All Pennsylvanians and PA ABC—Pennsylvania Access to Basic Care because 800,000 Pennsylvanians without health care is unconscionable. Supporting increased health care is who I am as a legislator.

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:

Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)

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



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

Reduce burden of property taxes



AARP supports



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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.

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support broadening the method of financing public education.
I support reducing the property tax burden.

Property taxes are antiquated and unfair. I have proposed a hybrid graduated income tax that would be fairer and provide substantial property tax relief. Unfortunately, most of the

proposals floating around Harrisburg would increase sales taxes which would place more of the tax burden on the poor and people on fixed incomes. I support efforts to eliminate school property taxes. Pennsylvania's funding formula has been rated the second most unfair system in the nation and we need major changes in the way we pay for public education. According to the Costing Out study, low-wealth districts make a greater tax effort than districts with more wealth. Homeowners have been stretched to the breaking point trying to pay for public education. We need a fairer system quickly.

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:

Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)

CONSUMER PROTECTION

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



AARP supports



Camille "Bud" George (Democrat) supports

Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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.

Camille "Bud" George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support the creation of an Insurance Consumer Advocate.

I am a co-sponsor of House Bill 1121 which would create the Office of Consumer Advocate for Health Insurance and a consumer advocate within the Attorney General's Office. I would also support creation of a consumer advocate for all insurance matters.

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:

Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)

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



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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



AARP supports



Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) supports
Richard Hansel (Republican) did not respond.

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.

Camille “Bud” George (Democrat) RESPONSE:

I support requiring utility companies to get PUC approval in winter to cut off services. I support the state contributing state funds to the LIHEAP budget.

I support requiring utilities to receive PUC permission to terminate utility service and a complete moratorium on shut-offs during the winter months. You will not find a more forceful or persistent advocate for LIHEAP funding that I within the Legislature. My House Bill 506 would provide \$20 million in state funding for heating assistance. My House Bill 285 would protect citizens suffering from serious illnesses by enabling healthcare professionals to certify that a serious medical condition exists and utility service cannot be terminated for up to 90 days. My language in Act 81 of 2005 enabled Pennsylvania to bolster heating assistance efforts for the first time in state history. Unfortunately, changes made in the state Senate made the assistance available for only one year.

Richard Hansel (Republican) RESPONSE:
Candidate did not respond.

[- Return to List of Questions -](#)