

State Representative Sean Patrick Brennan

Ohio House District 14

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February 2025

Proudly serving Parma, Parma Heights, and Cleveland's Old Brooklyn, Brooklyn Centre, Clark-Fulton, & South Hills Neighborhoods!

Dear District 14 Resident:

Throughout my 19 years on Parma City Council and, now, over two years serving as your State Representative I have been a steadfast advocate and voice for Ohio's consumers. With price increases affecting nearly everything we buy, now more than ever, elected officials need to be doing everything they can to provide inflationary relief to our constituents.

My advocacy for consumers dates back to when my single mom struggled to pay the lot space rent for our trailer, as well as the electric, gas, food, and other bills. Some of our most miserable days were when a car tire would need replaced, the dryer broke, or a pipe burst, requiring a plumber to be called. What made it even worse was that my dad, who had abandoned us, did not pay child support. It literally brings tears to my eyes as I type this and recall my poor, loving mom's sadness and frustration. God rest her soul.

Since joining the legislature, I have become fast friends with the Ohio Consumers' Counsel. First, Bruce Weston, and now Maureen Willis, and their staff are among the few folks in Columbus who are fighting for Ohio's consumers and, boy, are they smart and successful at it. As you can imagine, I communicate with them often, especially when it comes to some of the very complicated utility policies that are proposed or already in effect. In fact, I recently met with Ms. Willis to begin preparing for some of the bills that will be coming at us in the Energy Committee, upon which I will continue to serve this term. Know that I will continue to push for policies that will promote affordable and reliable utility services for you. Check out the Consumers' Counsel website at www.occ.ohio.gov to learn more about their amazing work and how they can help you.

As always, if my office may ever be of service, we welcome your call or email. I also invite you to visit my website to learn more about how I am serving you and to sign up for this monthly newsletter, which I write myself. You can also read all of my past newsletters going back to January, 2023. Please help by sharing it with others. Best wishes for a month filled with love, health, and happiness.

Sincerely,

Sean Patrick Brennan

State Representative, District 14
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Ohio Consumers' Counsel Maureen Willis and I in a recent meeting to talk about how we can continue to work together to fight for affordable and reliable energy for Ohio's consumers. Our work during my first term resulted in many successes for ratepayers, like you. I remain committed to the challenge!



State Representative Sean Patrick Brennan's Fight for Property Tax Relief Continues

Like you, my wife and I recently received our Cuyahoga County property tax bill. Also, probably like you, ours went up a lot, much to our chagrin.

During my first term serving you in the Ohio House of Representatives, I served on the Ways and Means Committee, which is the committee tasked with reviewing proposed

laws involving taxes. Know that I was very vocal about providing property tax relief before the recent increases went into effect. We knew this was coming and I was hopeful that we could do something at the Statehouse in advance to provide relief to Ohio's property owners and renters, whose rents are rising due to their landlord's property taxes rising.

Unfortunately, most of my colleagues disagreed and, instead, supported a state income tax cut, which primarily helped very high income individuals. I expressed how I hear daily about property tax concerns and literally never about state income taxes. Unfortunately, House Bill (H.B.) 57 was the only property tax relief bill that passed. It adjust the Homestead Exemption for seniors to inflation, which is a step in the right direction, but not enough.

Below are the other the bills that I co-sponsored that would have provided real property tax relief. Unfortunately, none of them achieved enough support and died at the end of 2024. I am in talks now with my colleagues to reintroduce them in hopes for success this time.

H.B. 60 - The Homestead Exemption Expansion Act would raise the tax exemption of a property's value from \$25,000 to \$40,000, providing nearly \$250 million in targeted relief to an additional 75,000 seniors.

H.B. 187 - The Ohio Homeowners' Relief Act would modify the way counties calculate property values by weighing property values for the past three years rather than just one. This averaging would help protect homeowners from large tax increases as a result of the property valuation adjustments occurring in one year.

H.B. 263 - The 70/70 Plan would freeze property taxes for residents aged 70 and older whose incomes are less than \$70,000.

H.B. 645 – The Circuit Breaker Act would provide a rebate of up to \$1,000 to homeowners and renters whose property taxes or rent exceeds 5% of their income. This would provide nearly \$1 billion in relief for over 1.3 million middle-class homeowners and renters.

High property taxes are the result of both the choices that the Legislature has made and the ones it has failed to make. Ohioans vote on levies more often than any other state in the country, yet other states boast stronger property tax relief programs. In the last decade alone, Ohio lawmakers have eliminated the 12.5% rollback that used to lower all levies, allowed the homestead exemption to be eroded by inflation, and cut local government funding in half. When the state decides to pay less, it results in our communities either paying more or having to cut services. It is time for the state to pay its fair share of property tax relief instead of continuing to expand local levy reliance. The most impactful proposals would cost less than 1% of the state's \$95 billion dollar budget.

The state should fund additional, means-tested property tax relief that is targeted to seniors and working people. It breaks my heart when a resident calls my office to tell me that they don't know how they are going to be able to stay in their home or apartment with all of the rising costs. I stand firmly committed to working with my Democratic and Republican colleagues at the Statehouse to provide property tax relief to all homeowners and renters in Ohio.



State Representative Sean Patrick Brennan Uncovers Government Pension Offset (GPO) Issue

COLUMBUS – In his quest to keep Ohioans affected by the recent elimination of the federal Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) informed, State Representative Sean Patrick Brennan (D-Parma) provides periodic updates on the implementation of the Federal Social Security Fairness Act. Rep. Brennan recently discovered that many spouses or surviving spouses of Social Security beneficiaries may need to apply for the benefit to which they are entitled due to the elimination of the federal WEP and GPO.

Signed by President Biden in January, the Federal Social Security Fairness Act eliminated the, so called, Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), allowing public employees who paid into state sponsored retirement systems, such as the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) and State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), and their spouses or surviving spouses to receive their full social security benefits.

However, because the GPO reduced or eliminated Social Security spouse's or surviving spouse's benefits, some non-covered pension recipients never applied for benefits and need to apply now in order to receive their benefits.

"I have always referred to WEP and GPO as the *public service penalty*," Rep. Brennan, who serves on the Ohio House of Representatives Public Insurance and Pensions Committee said. "This was long overdue and I am pleased that our dedicated public servants and their spouses will finally get the benefit they worked hard for, were promised, and deserve," Rep. Brennan added.

Rep. Brennan co-sponsored Ohio House Concurrent Resolution 6 calling on Congress to repeal the WEP and GPO to give public servants who paid into Social Security and their spouses their full benefits upon retirement. The Resolution passed in early 2024 and was subsequently sent to Ohio's Congressional delegation.

Because the filing date of your application may affect when your benefit begins and the amount of your benefit, it is highly recommended that you apply as soon as possible. To apply for the spouses' benefit, visit www.ssa.gov/apply. The surviving spouses' benefit application is not available online. You may call 800-772-1213 Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 7:00 pm for assistance. You may also visit www.ssa.gov for more information about the WEP and GPO.

The WEP and GPO were unfairly enacted over four decades ago as modified benefits programs for employees who received a pension for their public service, even though they had attained their Social Security credits. Under the WEP, public employees could have their

Social Security earning potentially lowered by up to 50% due to also earning a public pension. Under GPO, spouses or surviving spouses saw a reduction or elimination of benefits. There are currently more than 1.7 million people in Ohio's public retirement systems who are affected by the WEP and approximately 450,000 beneficiaries.



House Concurrent Resolution 6

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State Representative Sean Patrick Brennan Out and About in January



1 - What an honor it was to place my left hand on our family Bible and swear my oath for a second time at the Ohio Statehouse on January 6. You have my word that I will continue to serve you honorably and faithfully and to do all in my power to improve the quality of life for all 11.8 million Ohio residents.; 2 - I recently met with folks from the Northeast Ohio Brain Injury Foundation. I learned that over 1 in 5 people have suffered a severe brain injury and that Ohio spends very little compared to other states for treatment. We can do better and it would save lives and money in the long run to do it.; 3 - Congratulations to John Soeder for being selected Parma's new Ward 3 councilman., replacing Mark Casselberry who became our county councilman.; 4 - Thank you to the representatives from the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County who visited my office to talk about how we can better address addiction and mental health in Ohio. Find out more about them at www.adamhsc.org; 5 - I enjoyed Coffee with a Cop at Love Coffee in Parma with Parma Ward 8 Councilwoman Amanda Boyd.; 6 & 7 - I had a lot of fun with and learned a lot from Hal Rogers and the other members of the Parma Radio Club at Parma's Stearn's Farm recently. I even communicated with folks on the NS Savannah ship in Baltimore, Maryland.