

Educating Seniors: Bring Your Health... Home

A Monthly Column by Kimberly Harmon RN, BSN

My Conversation with State Rep. Paul Frost: A True Senior Advocate

Our State Representative (and my colleague) Paul Frost dropped me a note after he read my most recent column on how seniors can avoid becoming victims of foreclosure scams. He's currently pushing for awareness programs at the state level for senior fraud/scams and as he prepares his legislative agenda for the upcoming session, he wanted to discuss this and other issues confronting seniors in his district.

Rep. Frost recently earned re-election as the State Representative for the 7th Worcester District, serving Auburn, Millbury, Sutton and Oxford. He is now entering his 7th two-year term.

I deliberately use the words "earned re-election" because not only is Paul one of the most committed advocates for seniors I know, but he's also one of the very few Republicans in the Commonwealth to have earned re-election. And you'll recall how tough this election cycle was for Republicans!

Living in Auburn--like me--Paul and I have crossed paths when we were kids; both graduating from St. Mary's High School; these days our kids play soccer together.

Paul's always been interested in politics; the voting record he's amassed in the Massachusetts House of Representatives since he first took office in January 1997 underscores how seriously he takes the job of representing our District: He's voted in more than 3,000 consecutive roll calls and has maintained a 100% Voting Attendance Record in all roll call votes taken up by the Commonwealth's House of Representatives.

They say you never truly know a man until you break bread with him. I believe that, so I recently lunched with Paul to hear his priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

As I said, I'm getting to know Paul better, and the things I like most about him are his accessibility and authenticity. He's an engaged listener, a very down to earth guy and a genuine humanitarian. When Paul says he cares, I believe him.

While it's not my style to "gush" over a politician, it's nevertheless important that we give due credit where credit is due. Recently Paul voted for affordable home heating, sponsoring legislation that would extend a tax credit to seniors and their children if their children were to take on the role of being a primary provider for the senior to remain safe in the community; in the home of their child.

While every vote is important, Paul highlights his role in those votes that affect the lives of seniors in our District and the Commonwealth. Paul's voting record shows repeatedly his commitment to making sure seniors have access to services and can benefit from outreach programs at the state and local levels.

He relentlessly advocates that seniors have access to quality and affordable healthcare and sought to control the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs. He advocated for keeping Level III sex offenders out of public housing and he's supported the Worcester Community Action Council with fuel assistance programs for seniors.

Closer to home, Paul's a great resource for helping people who need handicap placards for accessibility to get them. Paul connects many seniors and others in need with the right services and state agencies when they seek help and he actively supports keeping local businesses in town as a way of keeping the property tax rate down for residents and of course seniors. He's involved with elder services, our local senior center, and has participated in promoting the Meals on Wheels program.

"I don't believe in band-aid solutions," he said, after I asked him about his legislative philosophy. "Most of the problems that we have in dealing with the seniors in our community are not just local problems—they're global problems. Because of that, we need to come up with global solutions. I'm working with local and national experts to identify the global solutions that are the best fit for our needs and our resources."

I've invited Paul to speak about his legislative priorities at the Auburn Chamber's Annual Health Expo at Holy Cross on February 11th, 2009 (more on that in a future column). In advance, Paul asked me to invite his constituents to contact him about any issue. Here's his contact information: 508-832-2840 (cell); 617-722-2489 (office at statehouse); email: paul@paulfrost.com.

Remember, the essence of home health care is to provide individuals, families and loved ones with services that promote maximum comfort and independence in the home.

Kimberly Harmon is the Founder & CEO of Harmon Home Health, Inc. She may be reached at kharmon@harmonhomehealth.com or 508-791-5600, and welcomes any questions, comments or concerns about any specific health issues you have.