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Bill seeks due credit for cash-payers

by David Morrison

HARBORING—There is one fear some won't that state Rep. Chaska Farns (D, Phila.) may have to be charged with being a harbinger. It's the fact that the fiscally conservative legislator has introduced a bill to punish anyone from discriminating against those who prefer to use cash rather than a credit card.

The bill, titled the Cash Consumer Protection Act, was introduced this month with legislative sponsors Rep. Farns and Sen. Robert O'Donnell (D, Phila.).

The bill would make it unlawful for any business to refuse to provide credit to a customer if the customer does not possess a credit card. (Businesses would be permitted to provide merchants from getting ripped off by skimming them to give security deposits in some cases, but merchants would also decrease merchants from requiring excessive deposits.)

"There are a lot of people who for whatever reason do not use credit cards," Farns said in a recent interview in the House chamber. "They might not have the option, but they have a lot of places where you can't make a purchase without a credit card. You can't check into a hotel without a credit card. You can't rent a car in the city of Philadelphia without a credit card."

He said one of his colleagues, Rep. Thomas J. Murphy Jr., (D, Allegheny County) is a sponsor of the bill.

Farns and he do not believe that there is a conspiracy between chargecard companies and merchants to require more customers to use credit cards. "That's not in fact an intention of the bill but of people who benefit from the cards being used to preserve the current system," he said. "It's all right for them to encourage people to use their cards. I just think they should do that encouragement in a proper way."

The bill was one of several that have been introduced this month by Philadelphia-area legislators that deal with economic subjects.

After attempting unsuccessfully to get a city ordinance on a well-trafficked road in his Northwest Philadelphia district, Rep. Robert O'Donnell (D, Phila.) introduced a provision in state law that gives state authority over stop signs on unimproved state roads in the Philadelphia Department of Transportation. O'Donnell introduced a bill that would give that authority to the Philadelphia city government when the state road is in the city limits.

Rep. Joseph Pitts (R, Chester) introduced a credit provision in the district in a bill he introduced. It would allow the state to regulate the Radio Run Country Club area of Philadelphia. Township, Chester County, would not have to register golf carts, which are used to go between homes and the links, even though golfers would be traveling part of the distance on roads that will be publicly maintained. The bill also allows the township to regulate the use of the carts.

Farns also introduced a bill that would prohibit employers from making employees work more than six days consecutively unless they receive a written waiver from the employer. He also introduced a bill that after a nursing-home employee is laid off because of a merger, the employee would be allowed to work 10 days without a day off. The measure also would allow a Human Resources Commission regulator that would assess employees that would not have to work on religious holidays that observed unless their jobs were essential to public safety.

Rep. Samuel Rappaport (D, Phila.) introduced a bill that would increase from eight to nine the number of Common Pleas Court judges in Montgomery County, although the measure also would create a new judge in the county. Rappaport's Center City district, he said he introduced the bill in chairman of the House Judiciary Committee in a variety of additional judges in several jurisdictions Philadelphia, he said, probably would not receive additional judges at this time if the legislature were approved.

Rep. Vincent Fumo (D, Phila.) introduced a package of bills aimed at reforming the method in which judges are chosen in the state. One, for example, would prohibit lobbying to hold the credit of a candidate for a statewide judgeship. Another bill would allow judges to select voters from selecting judges solely due to their political leanings.

Rep. Kevin Hall (D, Montgomery) introduced a bill to strip the state of its right to sue for breach of contract. He introduced two bills that would be supported by the insurance industry. One would increase penalties for those who make false insurance claims. The other would permit insurers to sue to enforce the type of insurance that they are required to issue under the state law — insurance that pays claims regardless of fault.

Rep. J. Stewart Givens (R, Montgomery) introduced a bill to create a new department of Community Affairs. A state-member Senator Clinton Bennett (D, Phila.) also introduced bills that would create a new department for low and moderate-income elderly people who qualify for a home care program. He also introduced bills that would make a misdemeanor for any adult who furnishes a minor with alcoholic beverages or for bar owners to encourage disorderly conduct from their patrons.

Rep. Steve Frenkel (D, Delaware) introduced a bill to provide for construction of a freeway interchange at I-76 in the district. Frenkel also introduced a bill that would be created by having the interchange at West Chester Pike on the only interchange in the township when the West Chester Pike interchange is completed. Frenkel also introduced a bill that would eliminate the West Chester Pike interchange from planning if he is successful in getting the second interchange approved.

Rep. George Santilli (D, Montgomery) introduced a bill to create a new department for low and moderate-income elderly people who qualify for a home care program. He also introduced bills that would make a misdemeanor for any adult who furnishes a minor with alcoholic beverages or for bar owners to encourage disorderly conduct from their patrons.

Rep. Keith Harter (D, Phila.) introduced a bill to appropriate \$7.1 million in the next three years to repair and replace Philadelphia School District facilities that have become a major problem for the district.

Rep. John J. Galante (D, Berks) introduced a resolution calling for the establishment of a blue ribbon commission to study state compliance with the federal Superfund law. The law, enacted in 1980 and amended in 1982, requires the state to pay for cleanup of hazardous waste sites.

Rep. William W. Rieger (D, Philadelphia) introduced a resolution urging the Federal Communications Commission to withdraw from licensing television Channel 33 in Philadelphia, which provides Spanish language programming for the 200,000 Hispanics in the Philadelphia area. The resolution also would be established a state television working group. The resolution introduced the bill, which is working on the issue has not indicated that the Spanish programming will continue.

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