



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Anthony H. Williams

8th Senatorial District

MEMO

Date: May 10, 2012
To: Philadelphia Delegation Members
From: Senator Anthony H. Williams
Subject: PGW Legislation

The Philadelphia Daily News recently ran several articles featuring disgruntled landlords. They were upset because PGW filed liens on their properties for their tenants' delinquent gas bills. My original bill was a companion bill to Rep. Petri's legislation, which would bar PGW from filing liens to compensate for unpaid gas bills. After numerous meetings with PGW, City Councilwoman Marian Tasco's office and my staff, I have decided to tweak my original bill. I also realized that this problem was multi-faceted. It included residential landlords who do not obey the City's law by neglecting to apply for a city renter's license, PGW failing to fulfill its notification requirements, and a general fairness issue surrounding tenants' responsibilities. I have listed the proposed changes to my legislation below for your review:

1. Limit the amount of the lien filed to **6 months** of unpaid bills for **licensed** residential landlords. My original legislation allotted 60 days of unpaid bills, but PGW said that time period was insufficient to fulfill their legal notice of termination requirements. However, 6 months is enough time for PGW to notify the tenant of his/her unpaid bills, attempt to shut off service, and to notify the landlord of a forthcoming lien.
2. PGW may file a lien for the **full amount only if** (a) the landlord did not obtain a city renter's license, OR (b) the landlord failed to give access to the meter to shut it off after written request. This will encourage landlords to abide by the law of Philadelphia, and apply for a license to rent. It will also encourage PGW to provide written notice to landlords before they can file a lien in the full amount.
3. Upon application for gas service with PGW, a tenant will be required to provide a signed statement by the tenant and landlord indicating that:
 - a. the tenant is renting property owned by the landlord,
 - b. provides contact information for the landlord, *and*
 - c. indicates if the landlord is aware of any cooperation programs with PGW.
4. Finally, my bill would provide a mechanism for landlords to receive third party notification when tenants are delinquent on their gas bills. PUC regulations permit it but my bill would permit PGW to require it.

Please note that this legislation will not save those who have not obtained a city renter's license. It is intended to help those licensed landlords who are blindsided by liens without notice that tenants were not paying their bills.