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## Burns shakes loose Vision 2025 emails, proves Afghan refugee plan was highly developed

Something didn't smell right to Rep. Burns when the Vision Together 2025 group began explaining its Afghan refugee recruitment plan after news of its existence trickled out late last year. His suspicions grew when Vision 2025 leaders berated anyone who asked questions or didn't fall in line – including Rep. Burns, who in January called for a public hearing on the controversial plan.

While supporting others in the community who pressed for more details – and who uncovered Vision's elaborate "Human Capital Plan" that included learning about the Section 8 Program and housing vouchers – Rep. Burns made his own Right-to-Know Law request of the state Department of Human Services.

Rep. Burns' effort yielded emails from Vision 2025 CEO Mike Tedesco, who wrote in early November that

*“We may be only a few weeks away from accepting our first families into Johnstown.”*

– a direct contradiction of the nonprofit corporation's public statements that their plan was only in the preliminary stage.

Rep. Burns continues to call for full transparency from Vision 2025, starting with making its board meetings public. He also thinks elected officials serving on Vision 2025's board of directors have a serious conflict of interest, and should decide which hat they want to wear.

## Mike Tedesco, President and CEO of Vision Together 2025

### Internal Emails vs. Public Comments

#### In private, Tedesco said:

*“What follows is a proposed plan to prepare for and accept incoming refugees and immigrants. Prepare for up to 100 Afghani families.”*

**Nov. 1, 2021** (Memo to Vision Together 2025 Board)

*“We may be only a few weeks away from accepting our first families into Johnstown.”*

**Nov. 5, 2021** (Email to PA Department of Human Services – Refugee Unit)



#### In public, Tedesco said:

*“Vision Together 2025 and Cambria County have no plans to attract refugees to the region.”*

**Jan. 8, 2022** (Op-ed by Tedesco in Tribune-Democrat)

*“Vision Together 2025 is ‘simply investigating successful programs in other parts of the country...’”*

**Jan. 6 2022** (News story in Tribune-Democrat)

# Burns uses experience, seniority to bring over \$279.5 million back to district

Every day, Rep. Burns uses the experience he acquired as former chairman of the House Northwest Delegation, along with his current role as chairman of the House Professional Licensure Committee, to make sure the 72nd District gets maximum help from Harrisburg.

Rep. Burns has used his savvy and know-how to deliver nearly \$280 million to the folks back home, securing a full range of grants that directly and indirectly create jobs and bolster the local economy, including:

- **Tens of thousands for small projects**, such as upgrading community ball fields and swimming pools.
- **Hundreds of thousands for medium-sized projects**, such as improving parks, streets and sidewalks.
- **Millions for large projects**, such as upgrading water and sewer systems, improving transportation, and expanding education facilities.

Rep. Burns knows the importance of this funding to our communities and he will continue to fight for every penny, making sure our area isn't getting shortchanged.



## Burns: Suspend gasoline tax to help constituents deal with inflation

*“This state made a short-sighted decision when it hiked gasoline taxes – and families and businesses have been paying mightily for it ever since.”*

– Rep. Burns

Stressing that he voted against increasing the state gasoline tax several years back, Rep. Burns favors suspending the tax – which is among the nation's highest – in order to help drivers deal with skyrocketing prices that top \$5 a gallon.

Unlike some others in Harrisburg to whom money is no object, Rep. Burns deals with the same pain at the pump as the people he represents. Just like you, he knows what it's like to pay twice as much to fill up your car, because he does so himself.

Rep. Burns views a gas tax suspension as a sensible way for the state, which is flush with cash, to help struggling households deal with the inflation wrecking many household budgets.

To increase supply, Rep. Burns has supported additional domestic production, urging the federal government and president to allow more drilling.

## Burns saves taxpayers nearly \$300,000 by shaving costs

As a fiscal conservative, Rep. Burns leads by example when it comes to saving tax dollars.

**Refuses state car!**

By refusing a state car and cell phone, relying on volunteer staff, and pinching pennies on office expenses, Rep. Burns has saved taxpayers more than \$285,000 during his time in office.

On top of keeping his office expenses to the bare minimum, Rep. Burns even paid out of his own pocket to keep an office open in a rural part of his district. He's always captained a tight fiscal ship, in Harrisburg and back home.

**Refuses state phone!**

# Burns tackles tough issues; Fights for constituents

*Displays no fear when it comes to speaking out  
on behalf of those he represents*

Rep. Burns doesn't go to Harrisburg to sit on his hands and be a figurehead. He goes there to fight for the people back home. When they talk he listens – and when action is required he steps into the ring and answers the bell:

- ▶ **When the nonprofit Vision Together 2025 formulated in secret a plan to recruit Afghan refugees** to Cambria County, **Rep. Burns called for full transparency and public hearings.** He also used the state's Right-to-Know Law to obtain documents proving Vision 2025 wasn't being honest and their plan was way more advanced than it had claimed in news articles.
- ▶ **When a group of seniors came to Rep. Burns for help after CamTran cut their bus service,** he didn't ask if they were Republican or Democrat before **Rep. Burns successfully fought to get seniors' bus service restored.**
- ▶ **When residents opposed the Johnstown Water Authority's plan to construct a windmill farm** in Upper Yoder Township, **Rep. Burns sided with residents to STOP the plan.**
- ▶ **When the state was threatening to close the Ebsburg Center's doors, Rep. Burns met with residents' families** and the facility's workers – then **Rep. Burns went to work to save the center and its 700 jobs.**

Rep. Burns has proven he is not afraid to take on government agencies, local authorities or large corporations on behalf of the people he represents.



## Burns brings Dolly Parton library to Cambria

Rep. Burns worked more than a year, cultivated a sponsoring partner in Saint Francis University and secured a \$50,000 state grant to help bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Cambria County.

This literacy building program founded by the country music star mails free books to children up to age 5 – and all you have to do is sign up at <https://imaginationlibrary.com>.

Rep. Burns learned about the program after hearing Parton speak at a national legislative conference – a setting where he scours high and low for good ideas – and immediately felt it was worth bringing to his home county.



It's been a big hit. Stay tuned as Rep. Burns is working diligently to bring more good news on the funding front.

# Burns' office has resolved over 112,000 constituent issues

While proud of the 112,257 issues he and his office have resolved, Rep. Burns has applied a broad and ever-expanding definition of "constituent service" to his job, impacting those who haven't yet walked through his door or phoned for help.

**Rep. Burns goes door to door in neighborhoods just to listen to peoples' concerns. That's how he knows one of the top concerns in our area is crime – and that people are alarmed over the recent rise of violent incidents. This led Rep. Burns to call for the hiring of more police officers as nobody should have to live in fear.**



Keeping everyone safe is a huge part of his focus, so Rep. Burns' solid track record includes securing:

+ **\$5.49 MILLION** for **FIRE COMPANIES AND EMS PROVIDERS** in his legislative district.

+ **\$1.83 MILLION** for **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**, including school safety and combating sexual violence.

## Burns helps 100,000 seniors pay for prescription drugs

Rep. Burns knows how hard it is for seniors on fixed incomes to pay for the medicine they need – so he voted to make 100,000 more of them eligible for the state's PACENET program.

This was accomplished by increasing the income eligibility limit by \$6,000 – to \$33,500 for singles and \$41,500 for married couples. And there was no added cost to taxpayers, since the PA Lottery funds the program.

The change Rep. Burns supported means 350,000 low-income seniors are now eligible for PACENET, a 40% increase from the 250,000 currently enrolled.



*“Knowing how hard it is for seniors on fixed incomes to make ends meet, I urge them to contact my office to see if they qualify for expanded PACENET.”*

*– Rep. Burns*

## Burns on front line of saving Ebensburg State Center



Because of Rep. Burns' vigilance and fighting spirit, the Ebensburg State Center – where 700 people work and nearly 225 mentally and physically disabled adults receive care – was kept open in 2017 and received a legislative reprieve in 2020.

Rep. Burns successfully fought back against the state's 2017 closure plan – even issuing an invitation to Gov. Tom Wolf to tour the facility and look the people who would be affected in the eye, as Rep. Burns had already done.

Then, in 2020, Rep. Burns joined in bipartisan support for a bill to enact a moratorium on the closure of such facilities. It also required the appointment of a task force to evaluate the state centers and provide recommendations to the Department of Human Services PRIOR to any closure.

Rep. Burns stands with employees, patients and their families, and will jump headfirst into the fray to beat back any fresh attempt to close the center.

## Burns brings No. 1 economic development tool in the country to Cambria County, allowing region to compete for jobs

Rep. Burns was instrumental in getting 375 acres approved for a Keystone Opportunity Zone in Cambria County – positioning us to compete on a level playing field with other regions in PA by offering tax incentives for businesses to locate or expand here.

To Rep. Burns, this important designation gives our county something to present as a reason for companies to set up shop – and provide good-paying jobs – in Cambria instead of somewhere else.

But Rep. Burns didn't stop there. He made sure Cambria's KOZ could include parcels of any size, making small towns and cities with blighted parcels of land eligible for KOZ status to aid in their rebirth.

# Burns offers free 'Push out the Pusher' signs

**Drug-fighting effort yields hundreds of arrests**

A supporter of the program since its 2014 inception, in partnership with Cambria County Crime Stoppers, Rep. Burns offers free "Push out the Pusher" yard signs by calling his Ebensburg office at 814-472-8021.

More than 500 arrests have resulted from citizens reporting illegal drug activity by calling the program's 1-800-548-7500 tip line, or by calling their local police department.

Rewards of up to \$8,000 are determined by police and the county's drug task force.



# Burns urges Johnstown to hire more police

When he went door-to-door canvassing Johnstown earlier this year, Rep. Burns heard plenty from residents fearful over the city's high crime rate and increasing violence that included eight homicides by gunfire through May.

As a result, Rep. Burns urged Johnstown officials to use a portion of \$30.7 million in American Rescue Plan grant money to hire more police officers, bringing the streets under control and alleviating people's most-pressing fears.

*“Some are asking, ‘How do we fund more police two years down the road?’ when the real question that needs answered is, ‘How do we help control this crime problem right now?’”*

*– Rep. Burns*

When a person in Johnstown has a 1 in 62 chance of being a violent crime victim, compared to a 1 in 261 chance in all of Pennsylvania, and millions of dollars are available, Rep. Burns thinks immediate action is required.

# Burns Protects Taxpayers

**Rebuffs state's appetite for higher taxes**

A firm believer that just like your household, state government should live within its means, Rep. Burns has never voted for a tax increase – not to be obstinate, but because he didn't think it necessary. Time and again, he's been proven right.

Rep. Burns remembers well the time he was punished by Gov. Wolf for voting against a proposed \$2 billion tax

increase. The governor restricted vital services to people in the 72nd District, but Rep. Burns fought back and quickly got the services restored for the people he represents.

However, because of Rep. Burns' vote the tax increase was defeated – and just a few years later, we came to find out the tax increase wasn't necessary

as the state has a healthy budget surplus.

Although it may be unique in Harrisburg, Rep. Burns' definition of "constituent service" includes helping you keep more of your money. He even introduced a plan to return a big chunk of the state's budget surplus to the taxpayers.

*“If in bad times we ask people to pay more, in good times we should give some back”*

*– Rep. Burns.*



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**Frank Burns**

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## Burns gets \$364K for Cambria County Library

Using his know-how of the competitive grant process, Rep. Burns obtained a \$364,100 state grant for the Cambria County Library to fund replacement of its HVAC system, and celebrated the success with library director Ashley Flynn.



## Burns takes 90 students to Pirates game

Working with Gary Martin (left) and Tickets for Kids Charities, Rep. Burns was able to help 90 students from Greater Johnstown Middle School attend a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game.

**Don't forget!**

Register your child to receive a free book each month from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Every child in the county younger than 5 can register for the program. Get started at [ImaginationLibrary.com](http://ImaginationLibrary.com) by clicking "check availability" and entering your ZIP code.

