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Silver Haired Legislature Election Set

APRIL 11TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

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*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

Area seniors currently have the opportunity to become involved in a statewide program to promote Missouri's older adults.

The Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) is a formally elected body of citizens 60 years of age or older that promote conscientious legislative advocacy for Missouri's older adults.

According to Ruth Dockins, the SHL Coordinator for Southeast Missouri, members are volunteers who serve without pay.

"Currently there are no term limits so a delegate may be re-elected to an unlimited number of terms. The elected delegates participate in a mock legislative session patterned after the Missouri General Assembly. The session is held in Jefferson City in the fall of each year. Many of the activities take place in the Senate and House chambers of the Capitol building," she explained.

Dockins said SHL delegates work all year as advocates for senior issues. They are kept abreast of proposed legislation and stay in touch with the legislators. Many of the legislators contact the SHL delegates asking for their input on proposed legislation.

There are 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Missouri and SHL delegates are elected from each AAA area. This brings about 150 seniors together in Jefferson City to present

bills, debate issues, and choose the top five for which they will advocate during the year.

Dockins said persons interested in becoming a SHL delegate should file a Declaration of Candidacy with the SEMO Area Agency on Aging office.

"This statement must arrive in the office by close of business on April 23," she said. A declaration may be obtained by contacting the SEMO AAA office at 1-800-392-8771 or locally at 335-3331 or pick one up at your local senior center.

The counties of Southeast Missouri are divided into three regions for purposes of SHL representation. The Bootheel region is made up of the counties of Stoddard, Scott, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin. This region has only one seat open this year. This is for one Representative.

The May 8 election will be held at the area senior centers during regular business hours.

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 11TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

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