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The Silver Haired Legislature

MARCH 26TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

The Silver Haired Legislature

Written by

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The Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) is a formally elected body of citizens 60 years of age and older that promote conscientious legislative advocacy for Missouri's older adults. All members are volunteers who serve without pay. Elections are held annually during the month of May at the local senior centers. Senior citizens elect three senators and twelve representatives from each of the ten area agencies on aging in the state, for a total of 30 senators and 120 representatives.

The Bootheel region is comprised of Scott, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Dunklin and Stoddard counties, this year three representatives and one senator will be elected from this region. The Ozark Foothills region is made up of Butler, Ripley, Carter, Reynolds and Wayne counties. This year there will be two representatives and one senator elected from this region. This year one representative will be elected from the Southeast Region which is made up of St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Perry, Iron, Madison, Bollinger and Cape Girardeau counties.

This past year the SHL met in Jefferson City October 10, 11 & 12. This annual meeting is held in the Missouri State Capitol building

It would be difficult to find a more dedicated group of senior citizens. Prior to the mock legislative session in Jefferson City they have meetings locally and determine what issues they feel are important enough to bring before the legislature as Silver Haired Proposals. After they decide on the issues they write the proposals which are presented to the SHL board for approval. The board chooses 20-21 proposals for presentation at the mock legislative session. Then, when the SHL delegates arrive for the meeting, their day starts at noon on the first day after the trip to Jefferson City either that morning or the day before.

The committees are: Social Service, Health, Consumer Affairs and Taxation. Each member has been assigned to a committee based in part on their stated preference.

In the committee meetings will be delegates from all the areas of the state. Some people on the committee will be for a particular proposal and some will be against it. Proponent speakers will be recruited to address the committee. After all proposals assigned to the committee are addressed, the committee will discuss each one and decide if they want to amend it in anyway. Then when the discussion and work on the proposal is completed the committee votes

on each one. They will choose DO PASS, DO PASS AS AMENDED, or DO NOT PASS. When the committee has voted on each proposal this way, they are ready to go to the House or Senate for debate and final voting the next day.

In the evening of the first day, the SHL delegates will attend a banquet. At the banquet they will visit with old friends, new acquaintances and their table mates. Of course, much of the discussion centers on the bills their committee worked on that day. There will be a keynote speaker, many times it will be a state elected official.

After the banquet they gather in their caucus room to "plan their strategy" for the proposals they are sponsoring. These meetings are where any problems or questions regarding the proposals are addressed. In this meeting all the people are from the same area of the state and have met with each other in prior meetings regarding the proposals. The group is generally of the same mind with respect to the proposals.

The next day the legislators meet in the House and Senate chambers in the capitol building. On this day the proposals that passed out of committee as DO PASS are voted on and then five of them are chosen as the SHL priority bills. This year the top five bills were:

1. Completely restore AAA funding for Meals Program
2. Increase funding for Medicaid Meals Program
3. Silver Alert system for Endangered Adults

(i.e. Amber Alert)

4. Raise the Asset Level (\$2,000 individual - \$3,000 couple)
5. Pay Day Loans

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After the proposals are chosen and the SHL delegates go home they advocate for these bills with their state legislators and encourage them to write and pass bills of a similar nature in the General Assembly.

The Silver Haired Legislators work hard all year long advocating for senior issues. Many of our state legislators have said that they count on and look forward to the input these folks have regarding the issues with which they must deal in the General Assembly.

If you think you would be interested in running for an open seat of the SHL contact me at 573-335-3331 or 1-800-392-8771 or your local senior center and we'll get the proper paperwork to you.

The paperwork must be into this office by close of business on April 22 with the election being held at your local senior center on May 7 during regular business hours.

Our address is SEMO AAA, 1219 N Kingshighway, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701.

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