



Media Release

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Arkansas Seniors Participate in Silver Haired Legislative Session

Little Rock, AR – Delegates of the 2012 Silver Haired Legislative Session (SHLS) wrapped up their work Thursday night after two days of writing, debating, and voting on bills that address issues critical to older Arkansans.

Julie Storm, 79, of Benton County became one of 100 delegates after serving in the Minnesota legislature for many years. She also served on the Minnesota Board of Aging before moving to Arkansas.

“I keep up with what is happening in our state government because I find it so interesting,” said Storm. “But I just don’t think the funding right now represents the seniors. That’s why I wanted to get involved.”

Prior to this week’s session, delegates met in their respective regions and chose three issues they wanted to debate, including legal and tax issues, aging services, long term care, and senior centers. The delegates presented those issues during committee meetings on Wednesday and developed their proposed bills. On Thursday, the delegates debated and voted on which bills to pass. This year, the Silver Alert and prostate cancer testing were among the issues delegates discussed.

The approved bills will be included in a final report to be presented to state legislators in hopes that they will pass some of the legislation voted on during the SHLS.

Wetzell LaGrone, 78, from Pope County participated as a delegate for the fifth time. He said finding funds at a time when budgets are flat is his biggest priority this year.

“The most important thing right now is to find funding for the senior centers so they can continue to provide a place to congregate and home-delivered meals,” said LaGrone.

To become a delegate, candidates have to be at least 60 years old and had to gather signatures from their home counties. Then, each delegate had to be elected to serve during their county election. The candidate with the most number of votes became that county's delegate, and the candidate with the second number of votes serves as an alternate. Elected delegates received training on topics such as the legislative process, how to write bills, and how a bill becomes a law.

The Silver Haired Legislative Session is a collaboration between the Department of Human Services' Division of Aging and Adult Services and the Arkansas Area Agencies on Aging. The session has been conducted biennially since its institution by a 1977 General Assembly resolution. It is one of 28 such sessions held throughout the country to give senior citizens a chance to participate in the legislative process.