



Missouri SHL Bulletin

February 2026

*A Newsletter for those who promote
conscientious legislative advocacy for
Missouri's older adults.*

Getting to Know President Bowers

Thank You to the Silver Haired Legislature

By Patricia Bowers, Board President, Silver Haired Legislature

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) for the trust and confidence you have placed in me by electing me as your Board President. It is truly an honor to serve in this role, and I am both humbled and grateful for this opportunity.

I am part of the Aging Ahead delegation in St. Louis County and proudly serve as the Representative for Franklin County. I have served in various positions with my Aging Ahead delegation and worked on many projects from Meals on Wheels, Voter Registration and more. I also serve on the Board of Directors for Aging Ahead, which has given me a better understanding of operations and funding challenges faced by the AAAs.

I have been a proud member of the Silver Haired Legislature for the past thirteen years. During that time, I have had the privilege of serving at the state level in several leadership roles, including House Minority Leader, House Majority Leader, Speaker Pro-Tem, and I presently

serve as Speaker of the House. These experiences have strengthened my understanding of SHL's mission and deepened my commitment to advocating for older Missourians.

Upcoming SHL Events

March 9—Senior Advocacy Day, Jefferson City

March 19, 2026—10:00 a.m.—Board of Directors Meeting (via Zoom)

This is an open meeting, and all Silver Haired Legislature members are welcome to attend. Please note that only Board members may speak or vote.

July 8, 2026—Proposed Bills Committee Meeting, Jefferson City

July 9, 2026—Board of Directors Meeting, Jefferson City

October 13-15, 2026—SHL Annual Session, Columbia



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Thank You to the Silver Haired Legislature (Continued from Page 1)

I have also chaired the Proposed Bills Committee and served as a Facilitator for Committee Meetings during our October Annual Session. These roles have allowed me to work closely with delegates from across the state and contribute meaningfully to our legislative process.

Presently, I am working on the rescheduled Advocacy Day to be held in Jefferson City, Missouri, on March 9, 2026. This important event provides delegates the opportunity to engage directly with policymakers and advocate for issues impacting older adults across our state. I look forward to seeing each of you at this event to make it a success.



(LEFT TO RIGHT) PATRICIA BOWERS, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, JOHN WALKER, PRESIDENT PRO-TEM, SENATE AND JOHN KRAMER, PRESIDENT OF SHL, PARTICIPATING IN THE DELEGATE OATH TO CONVENE THE 2025 SHL ANNUAL SESSION.

I retired from the United States Navy Reserve and later retired from the Defense Contract Management Agency. Both careers reinforced the values of leadership, accountability, and public service that I continue to bring to my role as Board President.

As Board President, I believe strongly in open communication. I maintain an open-door policy and welcome hearing from delegates at any time. You may contact me by email at SHLpresidentBowers@gmail.com or by phone at 314-807-9557.

Missouri Silver Haired Legislature Officers 2025-2026



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1 st Vice President	Janet Baker
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SHL is More Than an Annual Session

By Victor DaMommio, SHL Speaker Pro-Tem of the House

The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) Handbook is truly a well written guide to who we are and what we do. As outlined in the Handbook, we have an obligation to **“Assess the legislative needs and priorities of older Missourians by convening a forum modeled after the Missouri General Assembly.”** We fulfill this phase of our mission every October. SHL delegates from all over the state assemble in the House and Senate chambers of the Missouri State Capitol. We follow Roberts Rules of Order in a legislative session very much like the state and federal government. The delegates of the SHL will hear expert testimony, engage in debate, attend committee sessions, and eventually reach a consensus on our top 5 priorities we will advocate for. This may be the most difficult and time-consuming part of our obligation as delegates of the Missouri Silver Haired Legislature. It is a little unusual that this most involved and complicated task *is not the most important part of our mission.*

As an SHL delegate, we are much more than the October annual session. We will reach out to our Senators and Representatives throughout the year and particularly during the 2026 session of the General Assembly. The Handbook states:

“Interacting with your legislators encourages support for SHL issues and legislative priorities - either in introducing

bills or supporting their passage.” Embrace the priority issues that are most important to you and your loved ones, and then pursue them with the decision-makers in Jefferson City. Check out the House and Senate Joint Bill Tracking tool at

<https://house.mo.gov/LegislationTMenu.aspx?report=billlist> to see if there is legislation addressing your concern. You can type in a key word that will identify a proposal that

House and Senate Joint Bill Tracking

Bill Number / Keyword

Search: Sponsor:

Session:

addresses your issue. If there is not a proposal in place, will your local State Legislator sponsor a bill that addresses this issue? Ask them.



**INTERACTING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS
ENCOURAGES SUPPORT FOR SHL ISSUES AND
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES—EITHER IN INTRODUCING
BILLS OR SUPPORTING THEIR PASSAGE.**

SHL Handbook

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SHL is More Than an Annual Session (Continued from Page 3)

You can also reward the hours of work by the SHL Advocacy Committee by always acting upon the weekly advocacy reports that you receive electronically. It is so easy and very important to make a friendly visit, make a phone call, leave a message, or send an email, and to do so on a regular basis. Reach out with whatever method works best for you.

Missouri State Budget Director Dan Huang said, "The Governor has been pretty transparent and pretty vocal that this is going to be a very difficult budget year." This makes it even more important that our legislators understand that an investment in aging is a wise economic decision that has a measurable fiscal benefit for the State of Missouri. Julie Peetz, Executive Director of ma4, emphasized that we must stop allowing aging services to be framed as a cost. The SHL Priority Issues that we support save tax dollars by helping your neighbors age in place

in their home, instead of a taxpayer funded nursing facility. We should be proud of the fact that we are not only advocating to help our neighbors live and age with dignity, but we are also advancing fiscally responsible public policy.

In my eight plus years as a delegate of the Missouri Silver Haired Legislature, I have never met a Senator or Representative that was less than courteous. We are a non-partisan issue-

**WE MUST STOP ALLOWING AGING SERVICES
TO BE FRAMED AS A COST OR A BURDEN.
INSTEAD, WE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT
INVESTING IN AGING IS ONE OF THE WISEST
POSSIBLE ECONOMIC DECISIONS THAT THE
STATE OF MISSOURI CAN MAKE.**

Julie Peetz, Executive Director of ma4

based advocacy organization. As long as we are courteous, respectful, and follow SHL guidelines, there is no wrong way to advocate. It is not enough to raise our voice to one another in October. It is imperative that we make our presence known to the decision-makers in Jefferson City. This is a simple formula that has worked for 53 years. The SHL is a volunteer organization. This is what we signed up for, and no one is keeping score but yourself. We choose to offer our most valuable resource, our time, to work on a world we may never see. We are joining forces with those that came before, and those that will surely follow.

Decisions are still made, with or without You

Whether you participate or not, political outcomes will still affect your life.

Abstaining doesn't make you immune to the decisions of those who do participate.

Sign up today!

For Public Advocacy

E-Newsletter

To subscribe, go to

<http://agingahead.org/missouri-shl>

All SHL delegates are encouraged to become subscribers and to recruit others to subscribe.

Use these links to contact your legislator(s) to advocate for legislation impacting Missouri Seniors.

<https://house.mo.gov>
<http://senate.mo.gov>

<https://www.mo.gov>
<http://www.govtrack.us>

From the links you can track bills, committee hearings, contact legislators, and more.

Also subscribe to the SHL Advocacy update at: <https://www.agingahead.org/missouri-shl/>

Now is the Time to Make Your Plan to Vote in 2026!

Submitted by Barb Mercadante, Publications and Education Committee, and Jan Keith, Director of Community Engagement, Aging Ahead

Aging Ahead and its Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) have a long history of collaborating with each other and with other community partners to help ensure voters are armed with important knowledge to be able to cast their vote on election day. We include messaging around the following important topics:

- ✓ Registering to vote
- ✓ Absentee voting
- ✓ Voting locations
- ✓ Voting rights
- ✓ Disabled voters



Because of many changes in the voter laws and voter roll actions in Missouri, we hope you will join us in encouraging all older adults to verify their voting registration status and take steps to prepare themselves to vote in all elections in their districts.

It's not too early for your SHL delegation to make a 2026 Voter Education Plan. It is important to remind everyone you know why it is important to vote. Voting is a Right. Voting is a Privilege. Voting is the Heart of our Democracy.

"Your Vote Matters" flyer is on the next page. Feel free to distribute it to SHL delegates and Missourians you meet. If you'd like a digital version of the flyer, please email info@agingahead.org

VOTE 

Your Vote Matters!

Make a plan to vote!



2026 KEY ELECTION DATES

Election Day	Type of Election	Registration Deadline
April 7, 2026	General Municipal Election Day	March 11, 2026
August 4, 2026	Primary Election	July 8, 2026
November 3, 2026	General Election	October 7, 2026

MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE

- Verify & Update your Voter Registration
- Choose a Voting Method
- Find your Polling Place
- Cast your Vote!

 Confirm your voter registration info is current & accurate at sos.mo.gov/elections

 Your polling place may have changed. Check with your local election office to confirm where you vote in-person, or check at www.sos.mo.gov/elections



Acceptable Forms of Voter ID

- A nonexpired Missouri driver or non-driver license; A nonexpired military ID, including a veterans ID card;
- A nonexpired United States passport; or Another photo ID issued by the United States or the state of Missouri which is either not expired or expired after the date of the most recent general election.

If you do not possess any of these forms of identification, but are a registered voter, you may cast a provisional ballot.

Your ballot will count if: (1) you return to your polling place on Election Day with a photo ID; or (2) the signature on your provisional ballot envelope is determined by your local election authority to match the signature on your voter registration record. If you cast a provisional ballot, you will receive a stub from your provisional ballot envelope with instructions on how to verify that your provisional ballot is counted.



If you are unable to vote in-person because of any difficulties it poses for you, please request to be put on the **'Permanent Absentee Voter List'** by contacting your local election authority. **It's that easy!** Once you are on this list, your local election authority can automatically mail an absentee ballot application directly to you prior to each election. You will need to make this request directly to your local election authority who will send you further information.

Please contact Missouri Secretary of State office for more information

 **800-669-8683**

 www.sos.mo.gov/elections

Taxing Matters: “I DON’T KNOW”

By Thomas Eyssell, SHL Treasurer, and Chair, Aging Ahead Delegation Chair, SHL Publications and Education Committee

Four decades of college teaching taught me that there is no such thing as a dumb question. Similarly, there is no shame in admitting that I don’t have all the answers.

I am reminded of this by the initial responses to Governor Kehoe’s announcement of his intent to eliminate the state personal income tax or, more precisely, to replace it with a different set of taxes. It would be an understatement to say that feelings are strong on both sides!



Is this a good idea? *I don’t know.* Can it be successful? Again, *I don’t know.*

So rather than speculate, let’s start with some facts. Since the governor suggested we look at pre-COVID spending patterns, let’s go back to 2019. In FY2019 Missouri’s annual expenditures totaled \$28.3 billion.¹ Of that amount, the state collected net general revenue (basically income and sales tax collections) of approximately \$9.4 billion. And of that amount, individual income taxes collected totaled about \$6.6 billion. So, individual income taxes constituted about 70.2 percent (= 6.6/9.4) of general revenue.

Now consider the most recent year. Missouri’s annual expenditures in FY2025 totaled \$51.8 billion, an increase of 80 percent (!). Net general revenue totaled approximately \$13.16 billion. Individual income taxes generated \$8.3 billion – 63 percent of the total.

So – from 2019 to 2025, state expenditures nearly doubled, general revenues increased 40 percent, and individual income tax collections increased by about 26 percent. In sum, individual income tax collections *increased* despite sequential reductions in the top state income tax rate, while they *fell* as a proportion of general revenue by 10 percentage points (= -7/70).

Now to the hard part. The biggest unknown is what a proposed tax system would look like. As this column is being written, nothing specific has been proposed, apart from the Governor’s statement that he “would not raise sales taxes on agriculture, healthcare, or real estate.” Some have concluded that this means a massive increase in all other sales taxes. That may or may not be the case, but again, *I don’t know, and neither does anyone else outside of the Governor’s office.*

The bottom line is this: knee jerk reactions (in either direction) to the governor’s announcement are not helpful. My suggestion is to stay calm, wait for plan details, and then decide whether to oppose or support the plan based on its merits (or lack of them). For the moment, let’s not be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”

¹All numbers were sourced from the Missouri Office of Administration web page: oa.mo.gov.

2026 Dates for Your Calendar

	MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE SESSION	MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE SESSION		
March 9 Advocacy Day (rescheduled) Jefferson City	March 12-23 Legislative Spring Break Visit your legislators in your district!	May 15 Missouri Legislative Session Ends	Oct. 13-15 SHL Annual Session Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center, Columbia	Nov. 2-4 ma4 Show Me Summit on Aging & Health Wyndham Executive Center, Columbia

Interested in Serving on a Subcommittee to Implement the Missouri Master Plan on Aging?

Submitted by Kayla Curry, Community Relations, Office of Constituent & Emergency Services, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging: Missourians Aging with Dignity has been delivered to Governor Mike Kehoe as required by Executive Order 23-01. You can view the Master Plan on Aging at

www.health.mo.gov/aging. The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) will now work with Governor Kehoe and his Cabinet to implement the 10-year plan. DHSS is seeking individuals to serve on seven subcommittees, which will assist with the implementation of the plan. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please contact

Mindy.Ulstad@health.mo.gov. The subcommittees are: Daily Life and Employment; Family Caregivers; Housing and Aging in Place, Long-Term Services and Supports, Safety and Security, Transportation and Mobility, and Whole Person Health.



SHL Bulletin Now Distributed Quarterly

The SHL Bulletin is now a quarterly publication rather than bi-monthly. Publication months are February, May, August, and November. Contributions are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication month.

Anyone may contribute or suggest articles to the chair of the Publication and Education Committee, Karma Metzgar at metzgark@outlook.com.



Report Abuse and Neglect

To report adult abuse, neglect, bullying, or exploitation, call the department's hotline (1-800-392-0210), 7 AM to 8 PM, seven days a week. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may utilize Relay Missouri 1-800-735-2966. You may also report online at Health.Mo.Gov/abuse. For more information on this issue, visit our website at <http://health.mo.gov/seniors/abuse.php>.



SHL Online Merchandise Store is Open



The SHL now has an online merchandise store! Check it out! You will see a variety of items available in many colors to help you represent the SHL!

https://stores.inksoft.com/silver_haired_legislature/shop/home

For every item ordered, \$3 will go towards the SHL advocacy fund!



Published Quarterly (February, May, August, and November) Contributions due by the 15th of the previous month to SHL Publication and Education Chair, Karma Metzgar, metzgark@outlook.com. For more information: [Silver Haired Legislature | Health & Senior Services \(mo.gov\)](https://Health.Mo.Gov/seniors/silverhaired/) or <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/silverhaired/>