



Missouri SHL Bulletin

April 2024

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

Taxing Matters:

Inflation, Senior Incomes, and Property Taxes

By Thomas Eyssell, Aging Ahead SHL, SHL Communications Committee

Last year the Missouri legislature took two steps to ease the impact of inflation on seniors: Senate Bill 190 eliminated state income taxation of Social Security retirement benefits and also provided Missouri's counties the ability to freeze seniors' real estate taxes. This year, the legislature is



considering legislation that would update the income limits in the Missouri Property Tax Credit (also known as the "Circuit Breaker") to account for the sustained increase in consumer prices that has occurred since the current law was passed in 2008. Given the continued rise in the cost of living, I thought it might be worthwhile to review some of the economic statistics that make these efforts so important to Missouri's seniors and the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL).

Over the post-World War II period (1946 – 2023), inflation averaged approximately 3.7 percent annually. In dollar terms, this meant that at the end of 2023, it cost \$1,685 to buy what one could have purchased for \$100 at the beginning of 1946.¹

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SHL Top Five Priorities for 2024

1. Increase funding for transportation services to provide additional options for seniors.
2. Increase accessibility to public buildings for individuals with disabilities.
3. Require special dementia training in long-term care facilities.
4. Increase the Medicaid Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) to \$100 per month with an inflation rider.
5. Money recovered by MO HealthNet to be returned to the MO HealthNet program.

Taxing Matters: Inflation, Senior Incomes, and Property Taxes

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Inflation slowed for several years but has accelerated recently. Since 2004 consumer prices have increased by just over 65 percent, or about 2.6 percent per year. Unfortunately, the last three years have seen price increases averaging nearly 5.5 percent annually. Were this rate to continue, one's purchasing power would be halved in less than 13 years.

Even worse for seniors, price increases for day-to-day purchases have increased even more rapidly. Food prices have risen so much in recent years that the average household spends approximately 11.3 percent of disposable income on food, up from 6.5 percent only a few years ago. And, a recent Wall Street Journal article points out that deodorant "costs twice as much as a few years ago."²



Now consider that life expectancy at age 65 in the United States is just under 20 years.³ So, absent significant increases in annual income, seniors' purchasing power will decline dramatically over time. Taking the last three years as a "worst case," the average senior would lose nearly **two-thirds** of their purchasing power during their later years. Using the long-term average inflation rate of 2.6 percent as the "best case," seniors would lose "only" **one-third** of their purchasing power over their remaining

lifetimes.

In sum, the data explain why seniors surveyed by the Society of Actuaries often state that their biggest fear is not illness or death, but of running out of money. The takeaway from all of these numbers? ***Even seniors who are financially comfortable today risk losing ground financially as they age.*** These results underscore the importance of legislation like that above, which addresses some of those factors which contribute to the increase in seniors' living costs in both the short- and long-terms. SHL members should continue to advocate for legislation that will ameliorate longevity risk for Missouri's seniors as we begin thinking about bill proposals for the coming year.

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Footnotes:

1. Inflation statistics are based on United States Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
2. "Real Time Economics: Eight Dollar Deodorant" in The Wall Street Journal, March 14, 2024.
3. Life expectancy data compiled by the OECD.

Master Plan on Aging Town Halls Complete

By Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo, Ed.D., Healthcare Coordinator, St. Louis Area Agency on Aging, SHL Communications Committee



The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and the St. Louis Area Agency on Aging (SLAAA) co-hosted a "Missouri Master Plan on Aging (MPA) Town Hall Listening Session" to a packed house at the O'Fallon Park Rec Complex on Tuesday, March 5th. Older adults, those with disabilities and caregivers throughout the City of St. Louis including several senior centers and other agencies attended to voice their



opinions on a number of topics related to aging. Seniors responded to questions on the following areas: transportation and mobility, family caregivers, health, housing and aging in place, long-term services, and safety and security.

According to the DHSS website, it is seeking to make Missouri the best environment it can for our aging

population, so it has held a series of 12 face-to-face and virtual town halls on the Master Plan on Aging throughout Missouri.

The results from all of the Town Halls will be available soon and posted on the MPA

website: <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/masterplanaging/>

This will include the summaries of comments from all of the tables/break out rooms at each of the town halls.



AGING WITH DIGNITY
Missouri's Master Plan on Aging

Missouri Council on Aging Hosts Bi-Weekly Advocacy Calls

By Bridget Gittemeier, Advocacy Manager, Missouri Council on Aging

As we enter the last half of the legislative session, the bi-weekly advocacy calls hosted by the Missouri Council on Aging (MCoA) provide updated information and networking for positive advocacy. The partners that participate make the calls quite informative.

To access the Zoom link for the second half of the session, please fill out the registration form: <https://secure.everyaction.com/tfSTfcNlpE2uD-SISge8yA2>. The calls are scheduled from 11 a.m. to noon on the following Fridays: April 5, 19, May 3 and 17. For questions contact Gittemeier at bridget@missouricouncilonaging.org



Young at Heart Resources (YAHR) Puts Funds to Work

By Karma Metzgar, YAHR Board Chair, SHL Communications Committee

The Senior Services Growth and Development Program (SSGDP) funding received after the 2023 legislative are being put to work in all Area Agency on Aging (AAA) areas. The Young at Heart Resources (YAHR) set aside over \$800,000 to benefit the 20 senior centers in northwest Missouri. All centers submitted proposals of how they would use a \$10,000 mini-grant.



The following is a sampling of what was supported with the \$200,000 SSGDP funding.

- Meat slicer
- Food processor
- Warmer proofer
- Steam table and pans
- Handicapped electrical doors
- Convection oven
- New kitchen shelving
- Coolers, insulated bags, carts, pans, thermometers
- Commercial sink

- Dishwasher
- Deep freezers
- Stainless steel tables
- Lead-free plumbing
- Ceiling tiles
- Heating vents
- Metal storage cabinets
- Kitchen flooring
- Grease trap
- Asphalt for parking lot
- Chairs and tables

- Building repairs
- Landscaping
- Dry storage building
- Compressor for walk-in freezer
- Booths, tables and smaller tables
- Commercial refrigerators
- Refrigerated salad bar
- Silverware cart
- Plate warmer

An additional \$600,000 of the YAHR SSGDP funds were distributed through a proposal process for larger expense items related to maintenance of buildings, safety or furnishings. Funds were awarded for parking lots, flooring, software/hardware, roof coating, new roof, brick, signage, AED machine, ceiling upgrade, storage, heating and cooling, siding and windows, commercial appliances, kitchen upgrades, plumbing upgrades, automatic doors, and furnishings.

YAHR also purchased three vehicles with the SSGDP funds for staff to use in their positions.



Missouri Legislative Calendar		Put on your Calendar	
April 1	Easter Break—no session	Aug. 14	Senior Day at the Missouri State Fair—Sedalia
May 10 (updated)	Appropriations bills must be truly agreed to and sent to the Governor by 6 p.m.	Sept. 9-11	Show Me Summit on Aging & Health—Springfield
May 17	Last Day of Session	Oct. 15-17	SHL Annual Legislative Session—Jefferson City
Sept. 11	Veto Session		

Alton Senior Center Shares Funding Challenges

Submitted by Stacy Wilderson, Lead Cook, Alton Senior Center, SeniorAge and Gayle Johnson, SHL Communicatitons Committee

Over the years, maintenance issues have taken a toll on budgets at the Alton Senior Center. The parking lot is sloped and cracking presenting safety concerns. Funding remains a concern. The center has had equipment issues as well as growing pain challenges.

In the last year, the walk-in freezer was repaired twice. The thermostat has one out and the weather stripping deteriorated. A new dishwasher was recently purchased because the old one had to be constantly drained and used twice as much detergent.

Last summer, a new steamtable was installed. Our newest addition is a grill-griddle purchased through a grant. It weighs more than we anticipated, so we are searching for a grant to buy a hood, so we can use it.



The current challenge is related to growing pains and needs for services. In the last eight months, the number of people that depend on the center for a hot meal has doubled in size. This possibly is due to the rise in grocery prices. The kitchen would prepare for 40 people on a good day and now we are preparing enough food for 65 a day and sometimes that is not enough for the crowd. Clients now have the opportunity to take a hot meal with them when they leave which will provide them an additional balanced meal later. The number of home-delivered meals has also increased this year. We deliver homebound meals three days a week between four routes and they are bursting at the seams.

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Alton Senior Center Shares Funding Challenges (Continued from Page 5)



Because our meal delivery cars are packed full, we offer pick-up meals at the center. There are approximately 150 people who pick up their meals. There is such a great need for these food programs and they are costly ones. Staying on budget is almost impossible at times. The increase of the food program has caused us to hire a part time employee.

Stacy Wilkerson, Lead Cook, states, “We operate on a budget which is difficult at times, but it is a blessing to know that so many seniors depend on us. Knowing that they know they can come to us for help with food and so many other issues such as filling out paperwork and the other programs we offer. But on the flip side, it is sad that these seniors need this much help and cannot provide for themselves the lifestyle that they deserve. I'm just glad



that we are here to provide these programs to take care of our seniors and that I am part of it every day!”



Free 2024 Missouri General Assembly Roster Booklet

From Glenda Meachum-Cain, SHL Communications Committee Member

The following link will take you to a printable version of the **General Assembly Roster 2024 booklet**:

<https://www.sos.mo.gov/CMSImages/Publications/2024GARoster.pdf>

This handy reference booklet provides contact information as well as maps of legislative districts. You also will find information about Missouri's elected officials, the roles they serve and their contact information.



Aging Ahead Volunteers Help Reach More People!

Submitted by Barb Mercadante, Aging Ahead, SHL Communications Committee

We all know the amazing work being done by our Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), however, many people still don't know about the many programs and services available to individuals and their caregivers! It's important for all of us to help spread the word and extend the reach of the AAAs here in Missouri. Perhaps engaging the help of Volunteer Ambassadors is something that could help in other areas of the state.

Aging Ahead held a training on February 13th for the new Volunteer Ambassador program. Volunteer Ambassadors will serve as representatives of Aging Ahead at community events, such as senior and health fairs, helping to educate the community and spread awareness about the Agency and the services that are provided. The class of 13 volunteers pictured above become Ambassadors, whose commitment to sharing information about the important work we do will enable us to reach more people. Please share what is going on in your area to help us all learn and age together.

To Order Merchandise for OMA/WEAAD On-Line Store Orders Close on 4/19 and 5/22

To Order Older Americans Month (OAM), World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), and Support Our Seniors (combined OAM and WEAAD designs) merchandise, visit the on-line store open for a short time:
<https://stores.inksoft.com/dhss-weaad/shop/home>

You will find t-shirts, totes, caps, insulated tumblers.

The online store closes on 4/19 for May Delivery and 5/22 for June delivery for most items. See website for details.



May is Older Americans Month Theme is Powered by Connection



POWERED BY CONNECTION: MAY 2024

Submitted By Kathy Craig, M. Ed, Kathy Craig, M. Ed, Community Relations Coordinator, Constituent and Emergency Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services, Department of Health and Senior Services

Each May, Older Americans Month (OAM) is celebrated! The 2024 theme is *Powered by Connection* which recognizes the impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on health and well-being. Being connected plays a vital role in supporting independence and aging in place by combatting isolation, loneliness and other issues.

Here are some ways you can promote the benefits of being connected.

- ✓ Share facts about the mental, physical, and emotional health benefits of social connection and how it contributes to overall well-being.
- ✓ Promote resources that help older adults engage, like community events, social clubs, and volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ Connect older adults with local services, such as transportation, that can help them overcome obstacles to achieving or maintaining meaningful relationships.
- ✓ Encourage partners to host a connection-centric event or program focused on older adult mentors to youth, peer-to-peer support, or similar efforts.
- ✓ Challenge professional and personal networks to prioritize meaningful social connections and share the benefits.
- ✓ Inspire older adults to share what connection means to them on social media using the hashtag #PoweredByConnection.

For more information on Older Americans Month, go to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) webpage at [Health.Mo.Gov/oam](https://www.health.mo.gov/oam) or the Administration for Community Living website at [Older Americans Month 2024 | ACL Administration for Community Living](https://www.acl.gov/older-americans-month-2024).

To Order Older Americans Month, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), and Support Our Seniors (combined OAM and WEAAD designs) merchandise, go to this link for the [online store](#). Refer to Page 7 for more information on merchandise.

SHL Will Also Support Legislative Action for the Following Issues

- Income tax deduction for transportation of seniors for qualified organizations.
- Tax rebate for seniors to get energy efficient home updates.
- Establish a commission for grandparents raising grandchildren assistance.
- Raise the Aged and Disabled Waiver from 85% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 100% of the FPL.
- Increase Medicaid asset level.
- Restore funding for the MO Rx Program for all eligible Medicare beneficiaries.
- Funding for the Hearing Aid Distribution Program.
- Updating the Missouri Property Tax Credit (PTC) also known as the Circuit Breaker.



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/>

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