

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 930 (Senator Lenett, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

State Government - Silver-Haired Legislature

This bill establishes a Silver-Haired Legislature that will meet once a year to conduct a model legislative session that includes members presenting, debating, and voting on bills and resolutions. Each member of the Senate and the House of Delegates of the General Assembly must appoint one member to the Silver-Haired Legislature that is at least 60 years old and a registered voter in the district from which they were appointed. The term of a member is two years. The bicameral legislature must be modeled after the General Assembly in structure and format and must work with the Department of Aging to adopt bylaws and procedures to govern the internal operations of the legislature. The Silver-Haired Legislature may use the State House at specified times to conduct its model legislative session.

The initial members of the Silver-Haired Legislature must be appointed by December 31, 2010 and the initial term of members begins on January 1, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Assuming members of the Silver-Haired Legislature are not reimbursed for expenses, general fund expenditures for the Department of Aging increase minimally in FY 2011 only for contractual staff to develop bylaws for the Silver-Haired Legislature. Any other costs are anticipated to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The Silver-Haired Legislature must advise and work with the Governor and the General Assembly regarding its legislative priorities. The goals of the Silver-Haired Legislature are to:

- motivate older citizens to realize that legislative involvement is a primary responsibility of effective citizenship;
- help older Marylanders know that if they are to become a viable political force, they must become informed and knowledgeable about the issues facing their community, State, and country;
- develop a forum for older persons to discuss and debate issues concerning their own welfare and that of other citizens;
- educate its members as to their advocacy role so that they may continue their involvement in legislative matters and in their local communities;
- provide a model legislative body in which the members will have the opportunity to introduce, discuss, and pass bills and resolutions dealing with issues related to the State; and
- work for the passage in the General Assembly of bills and resolutions adopted by the Silver-Haired Legislature.

Background: The first Silver-Haired Legislature was formed in Missouri in 1973; currently 27 states have Silver-Haired Legislatures. In numerous states, Silver-Haired Legislatures are funded through nonprofit organizations, while only two states, Georgia and Nevada, have adopted statutes authorizing the creation of Silver-Haired Legislatures. According to the Pew Center on the States, members of Silver-Haired Legislatures are typically elected by their peers and try to influence bills related to medical care, consumer protection, and age discrimination, among other matters.

In addition, a National Silver-Haired Congress (NSHC) meets annually in Washington, DC and holds its own legislative session with resolutions being presented for committee consideration and floor debate. NSHC serves as a nonpartisan advocate for federal-level issues and concerns of importance for older citizens through education and awareness development. NSHC is composed of a maximum of 100 U.S. Silver Senators and 435 Silver Representatives from all 50 states and voting delegates from the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Aging, Pew Center on the States, National Silver-Haired Congress, Department of Legislative Services,

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 22, 2010
ncs/lgc

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