

RAHALL *Report*

SILVER HAIRED LEGISLATURE

by Congressman Nick Rahall

On November 2, a unique program will be initiated in the State of West Virginia, as the First Session of the West Virginia Silver Haired Legislature will be called to order in Charleston.

This three-day, model legislature will be made up of 134 representatives, aged 60 and over, who were elected by their peers to participate in this endeavor.

The Silver Haired Legislature will provide these individuals with a first-hand knowledge and understanding of the legislative process. It will also allow them the opportunity to formulate issue priorities, that in the future may serve as a basis to spur measures of benefit to older Americans.

Already eight States, around the country, have held similar Silver Haired Legislature sessions, with great success, and I commend the West Virginia Commission on Aging for bringing it to our State.

The Silver Haired Legislature is an excellent forum for senior citizens of diverse social, economic and geographic backgrounds to determine what course all levels of government should take to meet the needs of older persons in West Virginia and in the United States. And, this idea is very important because at a time when older persons are facing severe hardships due to inflation, recession and the elimination of important assistance programs, the Silver Haired Legislature draws attention to the fact that older people can still make priceless contributions to our State and Nation.

To protect the standard of living for senior citizens now, and for future generations, we must strengthen the Social Security system and expand private pension programs. Likewise, we must make employment opportunities available for older persons who want to take advantage of them. Most of all, we must not abide by a system which squanders the talents and lives of older workers on the false belief that they are less qualified than the young.