

Arkansas News Bureau

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Today's Vic Harville Cartoon



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AARP starts media campaign to educate voters on state candidates

Saturday, Sep 30, 2006

By Betsy Turner
Arkansas News Bureau

LITTLE ROCK - Although AARP Arkansas' new media advertisements say "Don't Vote," the organization's leaders say the real message is for Arkansans to get educated on candidates before casting a ballot.

AARP officials announced the kickoff of the radio and newspaper campaign Friday. State director Maria Reynolds-Diaz said advertisements started this week in 50 newspapers and on the Arkansas Radio Network. Diaz showed a copy of the print ad which simply read "Don't vote" in bold letters, with the Web site of the same name listed at the bottom.

At the Web site, readers can find information on Arkansas candidates and their answers to a survey from the group.

"It's a way of catching people's attention," Diaz said. "What we are saying is, don't vote until you know how candidates stand on issues."

The Web site currently has information on the gubernatorial candidates, as well as information about candidates in all four U.S. House races. Diaz said survey responses from state legislative and constitutional office candidates soon will be added to the site.

The only survey responses listed under the Web site's voters' guide are from Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mike Beebe and Republican nominee Asa Hutchinson. The survey asks the candidates for their views on payday lending, on giving nursing homes additional protection from liability and on flexibility in Medicaid benefits for long-term care services.

Diaz declined to comment on the cost of the campaign.

Associate State Director Pat Jones said no television advertising is planned but video news releases will be available to the media.

In addition to the media campaign, officials said AARP Arkansas would continue a statewide tour in its shrink-wrapped van distributing information about elections and the organization. Since July, the van has traveled to 25 events around the state and will do 17 more stops through Oct. 28, officials said.