

Calendar

Absentee Voting Information

- ❑ Obtain an absentee ballot from the county clerk, Jan. 21 – Feb. 4.
- ❑ Mail or fax your absentee ballot applications to the county clerk's office by Jan. 29.
- ❑ Personally deliver absentee ballots (except overseas voters) to the county clerk by Feb. 4.

Presidential Primary

Be sure to educate yourself on the issues and vote on Feb. 5.

Volunteer

Wanted: State Legislative District Advocates.

AARP Arkansas is seeking Arkansans with knowledge of state politics and an active e-mail account to join a new cadre of AARP grassroots legislative advocates in each of the state's 100 legislative districts.

People with a long-standing personal relationship with their state lawmaker, known as "grasstops," are also needed in all legislative districts. Training will be provided by AARP Arkansas.

To apply to become a district advocate or refer to us someone you think is qualified, call Sam Sellers or Lou Tobian at 1-866-554-5379.

Don't Take the Bait

A payday loan can hook you for life. But abusive payday lenders are finally beginning to feel the weight of the law: stiff fines, store closures.

SINCE MARCH 2006, 40 payday lenders in the state have called it quits, and the remaining 235 are now licensed, according to a survey released by Arkansans Against Abusive Payday Lending, a coalition in which AARP is a leading member.

In recent months, the Arkansas State Board of Collection Agencies fined one lender \$1.3 million for operating without a state check-cashing license and ordered all its 14 "Fast Cash" stores closed. With increasing licensing pressure in the state, several other payday lenders closed or sold their stores.

There are still more payday lending stores in Arkansas than McDonald's restaurants, and about 66 percent of them are not audited.

The coalition is actively encouraging more cities to follow the lead of North Little Rock, which issued a moratorium on new payday lenders. In 2007, an Arkansas Senate committee failed to pass a coalition-backed bill to hold payday lenders to the 17 percent consumer loan limit set in the state constitution.

Most payday loan borrowers fall into a debt trap when

they are unable to repay the loan within 14 days. They

roll the loan over or take out a new one to cover the first, beginning a vicious cycle. The Center for Responsible Lending reports that the interest rate for these consumers is typically more than 300 percent annual percentage rate.

For more information on the coalition's payday-lending moratorium effort, call Sam Sellers at 1-866-5554-5379.



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