the midwest

S.D. Prison Population Hits Record High

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota's prison population has hit record highs, prompting state officials to step up efforts to reduce the number of people sentenced to prison and cut the number of parolees who wind up back behind bars.

At a meeting of a council seeking to reduce the number of released inmates who are sent back to prison, officials said Thursday the average daily count of male inmates has grown to 3,191. The average daily count of female inmates hit a record 452 in February, but has dropped to 439 now.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard's legal counsel Jim Seward says the governor also has created a working group to look at the problem.

State Corrections Secretary Dennis Kaemingk says the percentage of parolees returning to prison dropped last year, but has risen recently.

Sen. Thune Says Obama Brazen On Oil Pipeline

PIERRE (AP) - South Dakota Sen. John Thune says President Obama has made a brazen move in promoting part of an oil pipeline while he has blocked most of the project.

Obama says he has ordered federal agencies to speed up approval for a section of the Keystone XL pipeline that will run from Oklahoma to the Texas Gulf Coast.

But Thune says Obama has delayed approval of a permit for the larger part of the project that would bring Canadian oil to the Gulf Coast.

The Republican senator says the Democratic president is trying to convince people he's doing something to improve the supply of oil while at the same time he is also blocking access to an increased supply of Canadian oil.

The Keystone XL pipeline would run through South Dakota.

Hunt For Suspect In South Sioux City Shooting

SOUTH SIOUX CITY, Neb. (AP) — Police are still searching for a suspect who shot and wounded a man in South Sioux City.

The shooting happened at a house in a neighborhood just before midnight on Tuesday. Police Lt. Chuck Carson told the Sioux *City Journal* that the victim is a 25-year-old man believed to be from Sioux City in Iowa. Carson says he was shot multiple times.

The man's name and condition haven't been released.

No more polka at the Corn Palace in Mitchell

MITCHELL (AP) — The Corn Palace in Mitchell is canceling its annual fall Polka Festival.

The mid-September festival has been held for 31 years, but Corn Palace Director Mark Schilling tells *The Daily Republic* newspaper that the event is no longer financially viable because of declining attendance.

Seventy-seven-year-old Billee Thompson has attended the festival every year, and says the polka community is disappointed that it is ending.

Former S.D. Company Indicted For Exports

STURGIS (AP) — A former South Dakota company and an employee are accused in federal court of exporting ammunition components without State Department permission.

Marc Jamison moved Jamison International from California to Sturgis in 2001. It went out of business last October. Jamison was indicted Tuesday on eight federal counts of unlawful exportation of arms and ammunition. Financial officer Kathy Greenhaw faces the same charges.

Authorities allege that Jamison and Greenhaw illegally exported items to New Zealand and Canada last summer. Neither has filed a response to the indictment.

South Dakota **Researchers Hope Sage Can Help Fight Malaria**

BY KRISTI EATON Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Researchers at Black Hills State University are looking at whether plants used in traditional Native American medicine could be used to help treat malaria.

Chemistry professor John Dixson and a group of students are trying to determine the active ingredient in four sages native to western South Dakota that have been found to have anti-malarial properties. The sages are related to a plant used to make artemesinin, a common malaria drug, Dixson said.

In recent years, officials have spotted an increasing number of malaria cases resistant to artemesinin in parts of Asia, but although scientists worldwide are testing new malaria drugs, there are as yet no realistic alternatives to artemesinin combination drugs, considered the most effective.

Increasing resistance to older drugs like chloroquine have made them useless in many regions. Without an effective vaccine or new mosquito insecticides, donors like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and public-private

partnerships are investing millions into finding a potential new malaria drug.

'There are a lot of problems today with resistance," Dixson said. "You see it almost every day.

Malaria, a mosquito-borne disease caused by a parasite, killed more than 650,000 people in 2010, according to the World Health Organization.

Dixson recruited Dennis Kyle, a University of South Florida professor who specializes in malaria research, to help the Black Hills State team grow the malaria-causing parasite, Plasmodium falciparum. Infected red blood cells were then treated with 12 extracts from different sages commonly found in western South Dakota. Four of the extracts were found to have anti-malarial properties.

The group is now purifying the four extracts to determine which molecules are responsible for the anti-malarial activity.

We assumed that if the American Indians had to work this hard to find a plant and get it ready to use it that it must have some biological activity," Dixson said.

Kevin Ellis, a chemistry senior with a

minor in biology, said he joined the research team because he is interested in using natural products.

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'I'm more of a firm believer of holistic treatments, not necessarily synthetic, but more natural products because of my background," said Ellis, a member of the Lower Brule Sioux tribe.

He said his ancestors knew which plants to use for various ailments but didn't understand why they worked. Now, he said, he is helping answer those questions.

"It's kind of interesting to find out because of my background, well, maybe there's this that happened, and why is it the way it is, and trying to reduplicate that and what nature made," Ellis said.

Jason Nies, a graduate student in integrative genomics, said the group's work could have implications outside the health community. It's also changing what people think about small universities like Black Hills State, a small liberal arts college in western South Dakota.

"It's destroyed the taboo that a small university can't produce stuff," he said.

Nebraska Lead-Poison Protection Bill Advances

BY GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. - Children enrolled in state-subsidized health care in Nebraska would have to undergo blood-lead testing, and health officials would recommend exams for others believed to be at risk, under legislation that lawmakers advanced Thursday.

Lawmakers gave first-round approval to the proposed lead-protection program for children, but they stripped out wording that would have mandated blood-lead testing for most incoming kindergarten students.

The bill's sponsor, Omaha Sen. Brenda Council, said doctors have tested only about 35 percent of the children enrolled in Nebraska Medicaid, even though the state plan requires it. She said her proposal seeks to increase that number and help the state gather better data to show what parts of Nebraska have a higher risk.

It also would require a state outreach plan for children who live in areas with older housing that could have lead paint or who meet other risk factors.

"The program provides for the

Department of Health and Human Services to take a more aggressive role in urging health care providers to recommend these tests" for children who live in

high-risk areas, Council said. High blood-lead levels in developing children have been tied to below-normal intelligence, academic failure, behavioral problems and learning disabilities. The damage usually is irreversible, and children may not display symptoms until it's too late.

Council said information collected about blood-lead levels among Nebraska children could help the state qualify for a federal waiver to lift testing requirements, if they can show that certain parts of the state are at low risk.

Douglas County Public Health Director Adi Pour said the bill was "a great first step" to protect children statewide who live in older homes with lead-based paint, or face other risks.

"Lead poisoning is absolutely unnecessary, and exposure is the number one environmental health risk for children," Pour said.

Pour said the data-collection requirement could help justify the need for statewide testing, or

allow health officials to focus on specific problem areas.

"It can go both ways," she said. "It can either show a level where physicians will say, 'We need mandatory testing,' or it will provide us information that allows us to do targeted tests.'

Most Nebraska cases in children younger than age 7 were seen in population centers. Douglas County reported 167 cases out of the 14,757 children who were tested in 2010, and Lancaster County confirmed 17 cases out of 2,778, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Nebraska's rural counties have seen fewer cases, but performed fewer exams. Nearly one-third of the state's 93 counties tested fewer than 10 children last year, according to health department data.

The Kearney-based Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska said the low testing rate and the number of old rural housing creates a "suspected but undocumented area of elevated blood-lead levels."

Nebraska lawmakers advanced a plan last year that would have

required incoming schoolchildren to undergo blood tests or secure a doctor's note confirming that they were at "very low" risk of bloodlead problems. Gov. Dave Heineman vetoed the measure, citing concerns that it was too broad, and Council failed to rally the 30 votes she needed to override.

The measure would have require a blood-lead test unless students raise religious objections or present a signed doctor's note confirming that their risk is "very low." Children would not meet that standard if they lived in a house built before 1960, were born in high-risk countries, or had other experiences that could have put exposed them to lead.

At least six other states have enacted similar laws, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Delaware, Iowa, New York and Rhode Island mandate screenings before elementary school. Indiana allows school boards to impose the requirement, while Michigan orders testing for children who are enrolled in state-sponsored supplemental food programs.

Lawmakers advanced the measure 32-0.



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