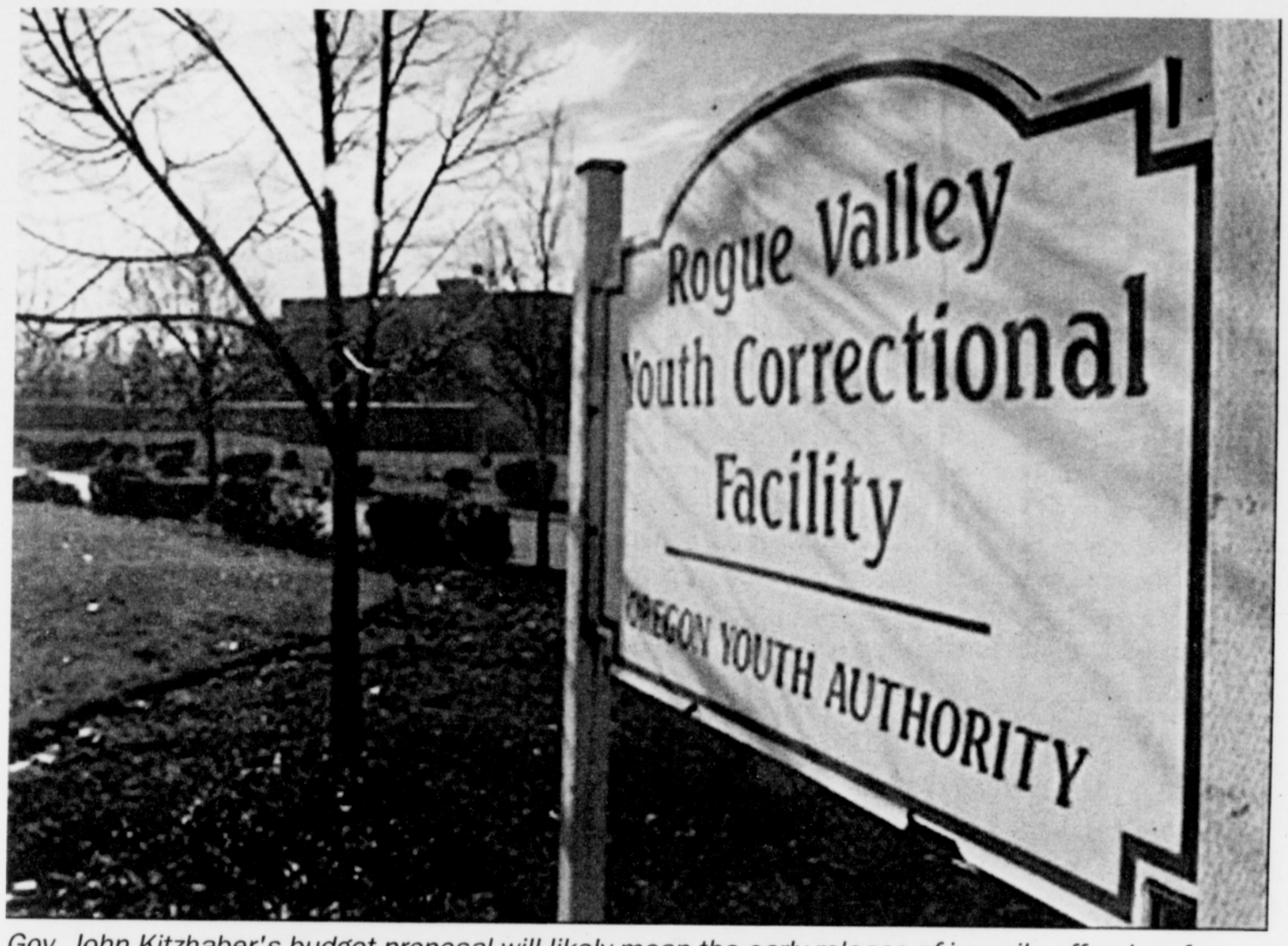
Law & Justice



Gov. John Kitzhaber's budget proposal will likely mean the early release of juvenile offenders from facilities like this one in Grants Pass. The Oregon Youth Authority system is trying to transition to less-expensive treatment options for juveniles. (AP photo)

Juvenile Lockups Hit the Skids

Budget puts more emphasis on treatment

(AP) - Hundreds of Oregon juvenile offenders are scheduled to be released into less-restrictive environments and hundreds more now under supervision could be released back into their communities.

That's the likely result of a major budget cut to the Oregon Youth Authority proposed by Gov. John Kitzhaber as part of his attempt to bridge a $3.5 billion budget gap that could expand with the next economic forecast.

The youth authority is scheduled to lose 425 beds, all of those likely coming from offenders who were put under supervision at the discretion of a judge.

Oregon Youth Authority spokeswoman Ann Snyder said the youth authority's most serious offenders won't be released, and those who were sent to the system by a judge — as opposed to a sentence from the Department of Corrections — will be moved into the less-restrictive environments.

"There is no situation where youth will simply be moved out of a facility and put into the community without supervision," Snyder said.

Snyder said the Legislature could do away with the cuts in its current session, or at least dampen their severity. The agency took a $33 million cut in Kitzhaber's budget proposal, down almost 13 percent to about $231 million for the biennium that begins on July 1.

Snyder said the agency doesn't have a clear picture yet of how many of its employees it will lay off, or whether it will need to shutter one of its 11 state facilities.

State Hospital Searches for Families

Hoping to find next of kin for patients who died

While the Oregon State Hospital has made enormous strides toward improving the care and treatment for the patients of today, there is unfinished work in honoring patients of previous generations.

Oregon State Hospital is the custodian of the cremated remains of approximately 3,500 people who died while living at Oregon State Hospital, Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital, Mid-Columbia Hospital, Dammasch State Hospital, Oregon State Penitentiary, and Fairview Training Center between 1914 and the 1970s. These cremains were never claimed.

The hospital hopes to change that and unite the cremains with family members. To that end, the hospital has posted online the list of names of the people whose cremains are in its possession. Hospital officials urge anyone who thinks he or she may have a family member who passed away at one of these institutions to review the list. As soon as the connection can be confirmed, the hospital will make arrangements for the cremains to be sent to the family.

"It was the discovery of the Room of Forgotten Souls in 2004 that served as the catalyst for the construction of a new Oregon State Hospital and a new devotion to improving the mental health care system in our state," said Senate President Peter Courtney. "We owe it to these former patients to make every effort to reunite their cremains with their families."

Courtney authored the law that allows Oregon State Hospital to make public the names and dates of birth of those former patients whose cremated remains are in its possession. This information otherwise would be protected by medical confidentiality laws.

The list of names for the deceased is posted on the Oregon State Hospital website at oregon.gov/DHS/mentalhealth/osh/cremains.

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