

Prison

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from the Legislature.

The Corrections Department closed an expensive prison for elderly inmates in Yakima last year, consolidating most of those inmates at the Coyote Ridge prison near Pasco. It is now preparing to close the McNeil Island Corrections Center in Puget Sound in April.

The majority of the inmates in Washington prisons are being held for violent crimes like murder, rape and assault, according to figures provided by the state Department of Corrections. There were 11,835 inmates (69 percent) serving time for violent crimes in 2010, and 5,240 (30 percent) serving time for drugs, property crimes or the category of "other."

In 2000, 62 percent of Washington prison inmates were doing time for violent crimes and 37 percent for in prison for drugs, property crimes or "other."

Nationally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that 52.4 percent of state prison inmates were doing time for violent crimes in 2008, the latest year available.

In Washington, the big change in the prison population has been the reduction of people serving time for drugs. That fell

from 3,208 in 2000, 21 percent of inmates, to 1,714 by 2010, 10 percent of inmates.

The reduction is a result of various state laws that reduced sentences for many drug crimes while increasing them for violent

The idea of releasing some inmates early to help reduce the projected \$4.6 billion deficit in the next two year state budget is being discussed in Olympia

crimes.

It's not clear if more violent inmates mean that conditions inside the 13 prisons are more dangerous. Female guard Jayme Biendl was strangled to death inside the chapel of the Monroe Correctional Complex on Jan. 29. Court records show inmate Byron Scherf — who is 52 and serving a life sentence for rape — confessed to detectives in a videotaped interview.

Biendl is the first corrections officer to be killed on the job in decades.

Officials at Teamsters Local 117, which represents corrections officers, believes the prison population is more dangerous than it used to be. The closure of McNeil Island will only make that worse, said Tracey Thompson, chief executive officer of the union.

"Overcrowding with a lot more violent criminals in the system is going to be a recipe

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Urban Entrepreneurs



The Multicultural Business Summit, Awards Luncheon on Jan 28 featured, from left, Vancouver City Councilor Jack Burkman, Clark County Commissioner Steve Stuart, Clark County Diversity Coordinator Rekah Strong, Urban Entrepreneurs founder Deena Pierott, Urban Summit Award Winner Olga Lafayette, keynote speaker Monique Hayward from Intel, and luncheon speaker Luis Navarro with the City of Seattle.

for disaster," Thompson said.

The union also contends that too many prisoners are being reclassified by prison administrators from violent to nonviolent, which allows them to be placed in the general population. Scherf, for instance, entered the prison system as a maximum security inmate but had been moved to medium security because of good behavior.

The union would like to see an overhaul of the classification system, she said.

The state is also expected to have 2,000 more inmates by 2016 and needs a new prison, Thompson said.

The crime rate in the Evergreen State is the lowest in two decades. And the state

ranks well below the national average in violent crime, mostly because violent offenders are locked away, McBride said. The downside is that Washington suffers above-normal amounts of property crime, because many of those offenders do not receive prison time, McBride said.

Washington has a prison population of just under 3 inmates per 1,000 residents, well below the national average of more than 5 inmates per 1,000.

In 2010, the vast majority of the state's inmates, 10,925, were White.

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Internet

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to find solutions. "We need to make sure our infrastructure keeps up or Portland will become a 'has been'," she said. "There may not be one grand solution, but there may be a bunch of smaller solutions that each deal with a piece of this issue."

The Challenge of Inequality

One of the dangers we face is the crippling inequality that will result from leaving large groups of people behind. A study by the Mt Hood Regulatory Commission, 'Your Voice' found that 28 percent of Portlanders don't have high-speed Internet access at home — largely because they can't afford it. Of those Portlanders who earn less than \$30,000 a year, 47 percent lack high speed Internet access, compared to just 5 percent of those who earn more than \$60,000 a year.

"I thought by 2011 we'd have accessible Internet for \$5 to \$10 a month, Craig

Fondren, director of Sabin Community Development Corporation but that hasn't happened in America," says Craig Fondren, direc-

Frankly access to the Internet is not a luxury any more, It's a necessity

State Rep Lew Frederick

tor of Sabin Community Development Corporation and a long-time advocate for universal access.

"To get high-speed Internet today, costs \$50 or \$60 a month or even higher. So if you're a single mother with three kids, you're going to think about transportation,

housing and childcare, and you're probably not able to afford to get online."



This 'digital divide' handicaps low-income students who can't go online to do their homework. It handicaps adult jobseekers: two in five can't search for work online from home.

"If we are going to say we

are the city of the future, and if we are going to say we are green and sustainable and bike friendly, then all of our citizens have to have that full communication," says Fondren. "If not, then we are not living up to that mes-

sage.

We have to push this as a city, as a state. It's not just important; it's necessary if we are to be a city of the future."

Many African Americans do have access to high-speed Internet, either on their cell phones or on home computers. Black themes often dominate on Twitter, and music videos feature thousands of Black musicians. But because people of color are more likely to be poor, too many still lack high-speed Internet.

According to the study, Spanish-speaking families and others who don't speak English at home are among the most disadvantaged. That's partly because these groups are most likely to feel that being online has little to offer them.

"We need to make it affordable for everyone," says Mary Beth Henry. "And we have to show people how it can be useful to them."

Crews

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buses; served as the first legislative assistant to then Rep. Avel Gordly; and in her later years, Evelyn worked as a school secretary at several Portland Public Schools.

Many will remember Evelyn for her involvement with Thara Memory and others in the Jazmin Community Marching Band. She and Thara got the Portland Public School Board to provide unused musical instruments for students in their all-volunteer program. The Jazmin Marching Band introduced many students to music and after being unfairly denied entry, "crashed" the Portland Rose Festival Parade becoming the

first all Black band to march in the parade and the hit of the parade.

Evelyn is survived by cousins Edna Robertson, Synetta Morris, Terry Lynn and

Felicia Robertson, Shelly May Penix, and Benny Blanton; nieces Sheri and Traci McAlister-Crews and Angela Golden; and nephews Uhuru, Zawdie and Karanja

Crews; and a host of their children.

Evelyn was assisted in her final three months by cousin Synetta Morris and childhood friends Avel Gordly and Charlotte Rutherford who thank everyone who cared for, assisted and prayed for Evelyn's peace and comfort.

A private interment will be held at Rose City Cemetery. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday Feb. 26, 2011 at Billy Webb Elk's Lodge, 6 N. Tillamook Street, Portland, from 4 to 7 p.m. Everyone who wants to celebrate Evelyn's life is invited to attend.

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