

Voters

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— acknowledges that the databases it uses to contact possible voters are imperfect because they are developed from commercially collected information. The group also says it expects people who receive misdirected mail to simply throw it away.

furnish ID and election managers use databases — such as death records — to see if someone should be disallowed.

But administrators in New Mexico, a potential swing state in the presidential race, warned that ineligible voters who complete the documents could make it onto the rolls.

New Mexico is one of two states in which noncitizens can qualify for a driver's license by simply proving

residency — not necessarily legal residency — and state elections officials have no way of verifying the legal status of those who

Julie Anderson, the auditor in Pierce County, Wash., estimates that about two dozen residents have contacted the county about registration forms arriving for dead relatives

Several election officials said they believed the voter registration systems were secure enough to catch people who might improperly submit the misdirected documents, since registrants typically have to

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Vets

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lation as veterans, far below the national average of 10 percent. That was due, in part, to incarcerated veterans not mentioning their military service upon booking, Lewis said.

Lewis and Herold-Prayer said that many veterans don't volunteer their status because they either don't realize they are a veteran, are embarrassed by their situation or are worried that their families could lose their veteran benefits while they are in prison.

After running names against a master list at the U.S. Department of Defense at the end of last year, and then working with the state Department of Veterans Affairs throughout this year, Herold-Prayer said that they've found veterans make up at least 8 percent of the state's approximately 16,000 prison population, and that the percentage could increase even more as the DOC continues its work. Also, earlier this year, the DOC changed its policy so that instead of relying on an inmate to volunteer their veteran status, they are being actively asked when they arrive at prison.

Currently, the most recent national num-

bers on veterans in state and federal prison are from 2004. A 2007 Bureau of Justice Statistics report showed that in 2004, an estimated 140,000 veterans were in prison nationwide. Tracy Snell, a statistician for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, said they have been revamping the survey, and the plan is to do another one in 2013.

"Really, no one knows for certain how many veterans are in the justice system right now," said Christopher Deutsch, a spokesman for Alexandria, Va.-based Justice for Vets, an organization that advocates for veteran treatment courts. But, "that's starting to change."

Deutsch said with the increase of veteran treatment courts around the country in recent years — there are nearly 100 in 27 states, including Washington state — there's more of a push to identify veterans in the criminal justice system.

"The earlier they can be identified, the better, because then you can start look at

diverting them to a different track, whether it's a veterans' court or a mental health assessment," he said. "I think states are getting much more sophisticated at doing this. But there's a long way to go."

Herold-Prayer has been visiting each of

A change in federal law prompted officials at the state Department of Corrections to investigate what more could be done for the state's veterans who are inmates

the state's prisons since May, doing visits like the one at Stafford Creek in June to make sure that incarcerated veterans know that they are entitled to military benefits upon their release, but also to ensure they're not currently receiving an overpayment of military benefits while in prison, which would mean they would leave prison already facing debt.

Veterans face restrictions on receiving benefits while they are incarcerated, but can apply to have that money directed to their family. But if they continue to collect the full amount, they could leave prison tens of thousands of dollars in debt because they'll be required to repay what they collected while incarcerated.

"We do not want to see that happen with any of our offenders," Herold-Prayer told the group assembled at Stafford Creek.

Ernest Grant, a 40-year-old Navy veteran, wasn't aware he had to notify Veterans Affairs of his incarceration, and was filling out paperwork to remedy that after Herold-Prayer's meeting.

Grant, who is serving a 30-year sentence for homicide by abuse, said the most helpful thing he learned from the meeting was his access to things like medical and housing when he is released as early as 2025.

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Mock Wedding



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Angela Vogel married 'Corporate Person' in a ceremony July 17 in Westlake Park. A small crowd celebrated the nuptials of the happy couple as a way of publicizing Seattle Initiative 103, a ballot measure slated for 2013 which among other things would strip corporations of their personhood status.

Costs

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expenses with student loans and summer jobs.

All told, the total cost of attending the University of Washington and Washington State University as an in-state undergraduate can total about \$25,000 year.

Tuition — which has increased as much as 20 percent during each of the past three years — accounts for roughly half of that amount. The rest includes books, transportation, living expenses and other student needs.

At Washington's four other colleges and universities, the estimated cost of attendance is about \$21,000.

Students have little control over the big ticket items like tuition or dorm fees, Ray said, but they do have control over smaller fees.

"I feel like students are angry, angry that they're paying all these fees, and having to take out more loans and more loans," she said, though she acknowledged that the costs remind her of the value of her educa-

tion.

Sarah Hall, UW's director of planning and state operations, said the money students pay represents only part of what it really costs to provide a college education.

"People think a lot about the cost of college going up. But the price to the family, which is often called the cost of attendance,

'I feel like students are angry, angry that they're paying all these fees, and having to take out more loans and more loans'

— Carly Ray, Washington State University senior

is different from the cost of providing education," Hall said, pointing out that donations, federal dollars and state money make up the rest of the actual cost of educating students.

Some of the biggest cost increases at Washington universities for 2012-2013

involve choices students can make, including where they live and with how many roommates.

At UW, the cheapest housing option is to bunk with two other roommates in one of the older dorms, which runs about \$4,260 a year. Living solo in a studio apartment in the university's newer buildings can run more than twice that amount, at \$9,600.

Single rooms at WSU can cost more than \$8,000 in some dorms, while the least expensive double room in an older dorm runs \$5,246 a year.

Mandatory student fees make up another big chunk of the college bill, with the fees varying widely from one school to another. They all cover a different mix of fees and some of the differences can be tied to how each college defines budget items. A fee could be folded into tuition at one school while itemized separately at another.

Central Washington University has the

highest total mandatory fees at more than \$1,600, according to state higher education officials. WSU is next at more than \$1,400 a year, followed closely by Western at about \$1,300 a year.

UW students will see the biggest increase in fees this year, from \$828 to \$1,080. It's happening because students adopted a new fee to support dorm improvements, Hall said.

One student, however, didn't characterize budget decisions in quite the same way.

Lisa Tran, a UW junior from Tacoma, said university staff crunch the numbers and then hold a meeting to explain to student leaders how they came up with next year's budget. If students have a major objection, they go back and make changes, the biochemistry major said.

"We don't have a direct say in what happens, but our opinion does matter to them," said Tran.

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