

Marchers protest cut in health program for American Indians

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — To chanting and the pounding of drums, hundreds of people marched Friday against \$33 million in proposed federal cutbacks that could shut down some urban health clinics for American Indians.

"We're upset that our center is being threatened, and we're here to send a message that you don't mess with a federal obligation," said Dena Ned, executive director of the Indian Walk-In Center in Salt Lake City. "Just because we live off the reservation doesn't mean we're not in need of health care."

About 400 people marched peacefully almost two miles from the clinic to the Wallace F. Bennett Federal Building for a rally, police Sgt. Lamar Ewell said.

President Bush's 2007 budget proposal says urban Indians could use regular community health centers. His budget calls for adding more and larger health centers for poor people under a \$182 million funding increase. The budget also would increase funding for clinics on Indian reservations by about 4 percent over the 2006 fiscal year, said Scott Milburn, a spokesman for the Office of Management and Budget.

Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson said those programs would do little

to serve American Indians in urban areas, where the clinics double as social service networks and cultural centers. He said 83 percent of the clients at the city's walk-in center have no health insurance coverage. The clinic serves about 4,000 people a year.

Anderson, a Democrat, likened the proposed cut to the government's "shameful" history of violating tribal treaties. "What is happening now is just part of that pattern of betrayal of Native Americans," he said.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said he also opposed the cut.

"This health care delivery system has taken decades to create, and if it were to disappear it would increase the health care disparities and barriers to care for American Indians from that of the general population," Hatch said in a statement.

Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah, and a member of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, said he would work to restore the funding.

Half of the country's 34 urban Indian clinics may have to close if Bush's proposal stands, Ned said. The remaining clinics would have to cut services, charge clients or raise money through private donations to stay open, she said.

"If these things are cut off, then we'll have to go back to the reservation with

our tails between our legs," Eleanor Iron Lightning told the crowd. A member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe from Eagle Butte, S.D., she said she's used the clinic since she moved to Utah in June 2002.

Community health centers aren't designed to meet the needs of urban Indians, according to the National Association for Community Centers. The centers are for people without health insurance.

In Utah, Community Health Centers Inc. has a \$200,000 contract to provide medical care for the Indian Walk-in Center.

But that's just a fraction of the clinic's \$1.5 million annual operating budget, Ned said. If the center were to lose its \$1.1 million in federal contracts, it would also lose grant funding, effectively cutting about 90 percent of its budget.

The center provides diabetes education, immunizations, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, holistic care, HIV testing and youth programs. It also operates a food pantry for the United Way that handed out some 5,200 boxes of food to Indians and non-Indians last year. Nationally, some 60 percent of American Indians and Alaska natives live in urban areas, according to the Census Bureau.

More tribes tapping into golf

MORTON, Minnesota (AP) — Dacotah Ridge Golf Club sits deep inside Minnesota farm country, far from any four-lane highways and surrounded by towns with tiny populations.

But the remote location has not kept golfers from flocking to test their skills against the stiff winds, rolling hills and demanding greens at the club, whose owner, the Lower Sioux Indian Community, just happens to operate the Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel a few miles up the road.

In Minnesota and elsewhere, American Indian tribes that have mastered the casino gambling trade are increasingly venturing into the golf course business. The immaculate layouts springing up around the country are routinely winding up on must-play lists of leading golf magazines.

"The native tribes that own casinos are realizing that you have to have something more than just a casino to bring guests in," said Henry Bouley, a member of Michigan's Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa and the organizer of the Native American Cup golf tournament.

"When Native American tribes put up a course next to their resort, they don't put up just a run-of-the-mill course," he added. "They put up a really spectacular course."

There are more than 50 tribal-owned courses in 16 states, and another 20 or so are planned, according to Klas Robinson Q.E.D., a consulting firm that works with tribes. More than half are situated near casinos.

The building boom has been recent, with at least 40 percent of them constructed since the turn of the century.

Last spring, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation opened a highly touted 36-hole golf complex — one private course and one for the general public — adjacent to its Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut.

In February, the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe rolled out a plan for a \$400 million casino and golf resort in central New York.

Next month, the first full season of play opens at The Meadows of Mystic Lake Golf Course owned by Minnesota's Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, which runs one of the Midwest's largest casinos.

Ancestral Puebloan remains reburied

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK, Colo. (AP) — Remains of more than 1,500 ancestral Puebloans uncovered by scientists, students and park visitors over the years have been reburied at Mesa Verde National Park.

The Hopi Tribe buried the remains and associated funerary objects in a private ceremony Thursday, capping 12 years of consultation with 24 tribes affiliated with the park, Mesa Verde spokeswoman Tessy Shirakawa said Friday.

"It's extremely important to the tribe to have the ceremonies completed so that the life journey that was interrupted can be continued," she said.

She declined to reveal the burial site, saying the tribe wanted to keep it secret.

"Without a doubt it is important," Hopi Tribal Chairman Ivan Sidney said in a written statement to The Associated Press on Friday. "Our ancestors must be allowed to rest. It's affecting our ancestry. They need to be taken care of in a humane and respectful manner. They have a special meaning to us because they are our ancestors and were part of our long migrations."

The ceremony was among several held or planned around the country to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

The law, enacted in 1990, provides

a process for museums and federal agencies to return certain American Indian cultural items to lineal descendants, culturally affiliated American Indian tribes and native Hawaiian organizations.

Through Sept. 30, some 633,525 funerary objects and the remains of 31,571 people have been entered into the Federal Register, said Sherry Hutt, NAGPRA program manager in Washington, D.C.

At Mesa Verde, services were held for remains from 1,528 individuals of whom Navajos, Zunis, Hopis and other Pueblo tribes are descendants, Hutt said. Also buried were 4,889 funerary objects, including beads, basketry and pottery, and 26 individuals who could not be identified with a specific tribe, Hutt said.

"Their remains are being buried in our homeland although the area is presently under someone else's jurisdiction," Sidney said. "We have not lost our ties to these sacred areas. We maintain our ties to the land through our pilgrimages, prayers and our religion. We appreciate any respect given to them."

Some of the items had been unearthed by individuals who later returned them to the park. Others were discovered by park staff, archaeological teams or university field schools, Hutt said.

The remains and objects date from

500 to 1300 A.D. and were excavated at various times between the 1890s and 1990s, Hutt said.

Shirakawa said the burial was the first that she knew of at Mesa Verde since NAGPRA was enacted.

The Acoma Pueblo Tribe oversaw a burial held earlier for remains and items found at the Animas-La Plata Project south of Durango.

Jim Potter, principal investigator for archaeological investigations with SWCA Environmental Consultants, said hundreds of thousands of ceramic shards and artifacts have been unearthed over four years of excavation work at 72 archaeological sites on the water project.

He said more than 200 human remains have been found. Another burial has been planned, but negotiations are ongoing and no date has been set. He expected it would occur in the next two or three years. "This project is yielding some really interesting results on the prehistory of the Durango area that wasn't known before," he said Friday. "In a 50- to 75-year period, people were coming in, building sites and they would leave rapidly. We're trying to understand the reasons for that."

Navajos approve sex offender bill

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. (AP) — The Navajo Nation Council has approved legislation that would require convicted sex offenders who work, live or attend school on the reservation to register with the Navajo police chief.

The measure's sponsor, Katherine Benally, said sex offenders would be responsible for registering and notifying police of any address changes within 10 days.

"In the U.S., one in four kids is or will become victims of sexual abuse," Benally said. "The problem is particularly acute in Indian Country where (the) rate is three times the national average."

The Sex Offenders Act, which passed unanimously, would apply to anyone who is found guilty, pleads guilty or pleads no contest to any sexual offense.

The registration would include a copy of the court judgment, copy of parole or probation order and the home, work and school addresses for the offender.

Failure to register and keeping the registration up to date would constitute a parole violation.

Wind River, county join against suicide

RIVERTON, Wyo. (AP) — After seeing six suicides in the county already this year, Fremont County and Wind River Indian Reservation officials are teaming up for a public information campaign aimed at raising suicide awareness and preventing suicides.

Reservation and county leaders unveiled a billboard Friday on Route 789 in front of the Wind River Health Promotion offices near Riverton. The Fremont County Suicide Prevention Task Force got a \$10,000 grant from the state for the campaign, and an additional \$10,000 grant was being sought

specifically to target American Indian youth.

Fremont County coroner Ed McAuslan said the county had 13 suicides last year, and has seen six already this year.

"If that trend doesn't change, we're going to have a record year," he said.

Data from 2002 show Wyoming with 21 suicides per 100,000 population — the highest rate in the country and nearly double the national average of 11 suicides per 100,000 population. Most of those suicides were among teens and young adults.

Archaeological sites have been looted in futile search for gold

PLACIDA, Fla. (AP) — Dust and sweat flew amid the click and chink of rakes, shovels and pickaxes on shell as Florida park rangers filled a hole south of here.

Not just any hole, though: This was an ugly gouge in an Indian mound. The gouge had been created more than 20 years ago by looters looking for pirate treasure.

Under the supervision of cultural resource specialist Chuck Blanchard, five rangers spent a day restoring the mound, on which natives lived from about 500 B.C. until contact with Europeans in the early 16th century.

"Though I've been shouting about it for years, the nature of these sites as actual monuments to our past is beginning to catch on," Blanchard said. "If we treat our national monuments like national monuments, we're less likely to get this type of vandalism."

"There's some personal satisfaction for me here: This is the very, very first

looter hole I saw in Charlotte Harbor — in 1983."

People were drawn to this site, officially designated CH-9 and once popularly called the Hippy Commune Mound, by stories of pirate Jose Gaspar, for whom, supposedly, the island of Gasparilla was named.

According to legend, Gaspar buried much of his ill-gotten gains in Indian mounds in Charlotte Harbor.

So, find an Indian mound, and you might find gold doubloons and pieces of eight. Only one problem: Jose Gaspar never existed. Unfortunately, some people believed the tales and sought their fortune by ripping up many of the area's cultural monuments.

"It's amazing what the whisper of gold will do," Blanchard said.

Looters have ravaged Southwest Florida's prehistoric sites for other reasons, including lightning whelks, which are sold on the Asian market and turned into devotional candles.

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