

# Legislative panel says prison should review education, work

## *Progress report due by Sept. 30*

PIERRE (AP) — The Corrections Department should outline its plans to provide work and schooling to the increased number of inmates in an expanded prison at Springfield, a legislative panel decided Wednesday.

Corrections officials have said a building project at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, expected to be finished in July, will raise the prison's capacity by 400 to 1,300 inmates.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audits Committee voted to request a report from the department on jobs and educational opportunities for the prison's inmates.

"The employment and educational opportunities available to the prisoners is lacking," the committee statement said. "More opportunities need to be made available to the current inmates as well as the new inmates who will

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be housed at the newly constructed barracks."

At minimum, the department must provide the committee with a progress report by Sept. 30, the panel decided. Lawmakers said the progress report should also outline the number of inmates with jobs, as well as the number of inmates who would like jobs — and the number who are not interested in working.

Springfield Warden Bob Dooley said he created a committee of staff members to examine opportunities for both jobs and education and to recommend changes.

"Those are concerns of ours, too," Dooley said Wednesday. "We aren't just standing by waiting to see what happens."

The expanded prison will mean

more jobs for inmate janitors and groundskeepers, as well as for workers in the dining hall and laundry, Dooley said.

Dooley said that although the expansion includes space for 400 more low- to medium-security inmates, the population increase will be gradual.

"The first year, we're looking at an increase of about 227," Dooley said. "I don't see us getting up to that 400 for some time."

Dooley said he intends to give the legislative committee regular progress reports.

The department's draft version of the report included only job information. Republicans Sen. Jason Gant, R-Sioux Falls and Rep. Deb Peters, R-Hartford, asked that education be included.

Gant said job training and education would give prisoners better chances of getting jobs when they finish their sentences.

Peters agreed, saying, "If they can get their education level up even by one thing, working hard to get the degree, whatever it may be, even an associate degree, they're more apt to stay out of prison."

Rep. Mike Buckingham, R-Rapid City, said the education and training must be relevant to the outside world.

"The last thing we want to do is assist people out of prison with skills that don't meet the expectation of employers," Buckingham said.

The panel decided against recommending that the Corrections Department provide better food at Springfield.

"Just how much do we want to micromanage?" asked Sen. Jerry Apa, R-Lead.

"Penal institutions will always have inmates complaining about food," added Sen. Bill Earley, R-Sioux Falls.

The discussion was the result of a visit by committee members to the Springfield prison earlier this month.

## Rounds visits Aberdeen