

Local

Lawyers oppose health services delay

BY MARTHA BELLISLE
The Associated Press

SEATTLE

Lawyers for mentally ill criminal defendants want a federal judge to force Washington officials to provide timely mental health services, opposing a delay sought by the state.

The judge ruled last year that the state is violating the constitutional rights of its most vulnerable residents by forcing them to wait in jails for weeks or months before receiving competency evaluations or treatment to restore their ability to assist in their defense during trial.

U.S. District Judge Marsha Pechman gave the state until Jan. 2 to make changes. On Dec. 30, officials asked for more time.

State officials said they have worked diligently toward complying with the order, but demands made by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services hampered their efforts.

The agency threatened to cut funding for the state's largest psychiatric facility, Western State Hospital, four times last year over safety concerns. That facility must fix its safety violations by March 1 or lose millions in federal funds.

Because of that, the state asked the judge to move the competency services deadline to May 27.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee said in his State of the State address that the mental health crisis resulted from "devastating cuts to services" made during the recession. He said the state continues "to be hobbled by those cuts" but his budget plan adds funds for new facilities, additional staff and more psychiatrists.

"Our aim is simple: timely access to high-quality treatment in the appropriate setting," Inslee said. "We've all known someone struggling with mental illness. Let's get this done for real this year."

His comments came after attorneys for the mentally ill defendants filed a motion late Monday in U.S. District Court saying the state's request for a delay should be denied. They asked the judge to "act to prevent further floundering" by Washington officials.

The motion said the state Department of Social and Health Services has refused to adhere to recommendations from a court-appointed monitor that would have eased the delays. The wait times for competency evaluations and restoration services actually have increased since the judge's ruling, the lawyers said.

The average number of days people had to wait to have an evaluation at Eastern State Hospital was 41 days in March 2015 and now stands at 86 days, the motion said. At Western State Hospital, the average wait time for evaluations went down over the past year, but the wait times for restoration treatment increased from 29 days to 36, the motion said.

Olympia man charged in prostitution sting

Richard A. Homchick of Olympia has been placed on paid administrative leave from his job at the Timberland Regional Library

Homchick is accused of running a website and posting reviews for women working as prostitutes

King County Sheriff's Office and Bellevue Police Department led the investigation

BY ANDY HORBS
ahorbs@theolympian.com

The business manager for the Timberland Regional Library system was

among more than a dozen people charged last week in connection with a prostitution and sex-trafficking ring involving Korean women in King County. Olympia resident Rich-

ard Alexander Homchick, 49, was charged Thursday with promoting prostitution in the second-degree. Bail was set at \$75,000. An arrest warrant was also issued Thursday, but the King County Prosecutor's Office confirmed Tuesday that Homchick had not yet been arrested or booked.

Homchick's arraignment is slated for Jan. 21 in King County Superior Court, and he will be booked at that time. Sgt. Cindi West said that the sheriff's office had limited personnel and was unable



Homchick

brought to the United States from South Korea and were forced into prostitution to pay off debts.

Much of the online prostitution activity flowed through a website called TheReviewBoard.net, which has between 18,000 and 20,000 members, documents show. Detectives obtained a search warrant for an email account belonging to Homchick that they said contained "several thousand emails" to and from other members of The League, an exclusive invitation-only group within The Review Board that has members from all over the United States.

Police allege Homchick's participation in the ring included the development of a website called Kgdtdlights.com, one of two websites The League said nearly all of the exploited women were

SEE STING, 6A



Gov. Jay Inslee leaves amid a standing ovation following the State of the State Address to a joint session of the Washington Senate and House of Representatives on Tuesday.

Inslee spans issues in State of the State

Education fixes and teacher shortage top priorities

New minimum wage initiative for \$13.50 an hour

Mental health facilities, wildfire emergency funds also addressed

BY RACHEL LA CORTE
The Associated Press

Gov. Jay Inslee says that it's "absolutely necessary" for lawmakers to develop a framework for paying for the state's basic education system during the current 60-day legislative session.

In his annual State of the State speech Tuesday, Inslee didn't mention the state Supreme Court contempt order Washington is

currently under, but said the state will be ready to take final steps ahead of a 2018 deadline.

"We're not going to just fix a few potholes — we're going to finish the job," Inslee said. "That means actually financing these critical investments so our kids and grandkids get the education they deserve."

Lawmakers last year added more than \$2 billion to the state's education budget — setting

aside more money for all-day kindergarten, smaller classes in the younger grades, pupil transportation and classroom supplies and equipment, but still need to address the state's over-reliance on local levies.

"Our next deadline requires the Legislature to fully fund basic education in the 2017 legislative session, and there's no reason we can't do that," Inslee said.

Other issues in Inslee's address included:

MENTAL HEALTH: Inslee noted that his supplemental budget proposal unveiled last month includes money for four new, 16-bed triage facilities and three full mobile



Carmento Floyd, widow of former Washington State University President Elson Floyd, is honored before Gov. Jay Inslee's State of the State address. Elson Floyd died in June 2015 after a battle with cancer.

crisis teams to help the mentally ill. He says more staffing is also needed at state psychiatric hospitals.

"We need to ensure we have enough doctors, nurses, social workers and treatment staff so that everyone is safe — patients and staff," he said.

WILDFIRES: Inslee wants to use \$180 million in the emergency funds

account to help pay for the costs of last year's huge wildfires across the state.

In noting that more than 1 million acres were burned and more than 300 homes were destroyed, the Democratic governor also said he wants to use \$29 million from the Disaster Re-

SEE STATE, 5A

Men wounded in Yelm Highway shooting still at Harborview

BY AMELIA DICKSON
adickson@theolympian.com

Both men wounded Saturday in a shooting on Yelm Highway are recovering at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, according to the Thurston County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff's Lt. Cliff Ziesemer said both men are

expected to survive their wounds. One man, who was wanted for jumping bail and who police said fired the first shot, will be arrested on suspicion of second-degree attempted murder upon release from the hospital.

He is under supervision of King County corrections officers, Ziesemer said. The man was shot in

the hip and the leg.

A bail enforcement agent, who will not face criminal charges, was shot more than once in the head.

The shooting occurred about 7:30 a.m. when a Nisqually tribal officer and two bail enforcement agents employed by a private company went to a home in the 12700

block of Yelm Highway. They were attempting to arrest the resident on a Thurston County Superior Court warrant for first-degree burglary, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The man sought, who police said was armed with a pistol, shot one agent. The other agent shot the man.

The Nisqually officer didn't participate in the shooting and was out of sight of the scene. He immediately radioed dispatch to report shots fired.

When Thurston County Sheriff's detectives arrived at the scene, they learned C-4 explosives were stored in a shop on the property. A Thurston County judge granted a search warrant and the Washington State Patrol Explosives Unit located about a pound of the explosive, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Amelia Dickson: 360-754-5445, @Amelia_Oly

FROM PAGE 3A
STING

used to promote Korean prostitutes and brothels, according to charging documents. That site promoted more than 300 sex workers in 2015 and received 1 million page views just in November. A detective attended five "meet and greets" with ring members between June and October 2015. The detective reported receiving emails from Homchick and other members that discussed the prostitutes. Charging documents contain excerpts from graphic emails allegedly sent by Homchick that rate his experiences with particular prostitutes. Homchick is alleged to have posted and removed online ads for the prostituted women. According to documents, the prostitution ring has "directly expanded and increased the market for exploited women in the region. As a result, numerous Asian brothels have sprung up in the region to respond directly to the demand for prostitution."

The documents also state that Homchick "purchased sex many, many times (even multiple times

a week), usually at a rate of \$300 per hour, translating into tens of thousands of dollars a year." Timberland Regional Library placed Homchick on paid administrative leave last Friday because of the criminal charges, said Walter Bracy, the library system's human resources manager. No decision has been made on Homchick's employment, and it is unknown if any of the alleged activities were done using library resources, said Bracy, who noted that the library system is "evaluating all of our options right now."

The Timberland Regional Library is a public system that serves Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. As the business manager, Homchick worked with an operating budget of about \$21.7 million in 2015. The library system includes 27 community libraries, two cooperative partnership library locations and four library kiosks, according to Timberland's website.

Andy Hobbs: 360-704-6869, @andyhobbs

FROM PAGE 1A
UNION

publicans to respect and welcome immigrants, saying they could love American values as much as the native-born. It seemed likely to create an unusual moment of alignment, on a night when the two parties are usually keen to signal their differences. But Obama's speech began with a lighthearted jab at the many, many people running to replace him. Of them, at least two were in the House chamber for the speech: Sen. Bernie Sanders (Vermont), running as a Democrat, and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Florida. "For this final address, I'm going to try to make it shorter," Obama said. "I know some of you are antsy to get back to Iowa." Speaking to reporters

Monday, White House press secretary Josh Earnest described the address as "this one moment where the country sort of acknowledges that the president gets an hour to assess the condition of the country and to offer up a prescription for confronting the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities." In an interview that aired on the "Today" show Tuesday, Obama said "it's a regret" that he was not able to do more to bring the country together politically. "But I'm pretty confident that the overwhelming majority of Americans are looking for the kind of politics that does ease our hopes and not our fears, that does work together and doesn't try to divide,

that isn't looking for simplistic solutions and scapegoating but looks for us buckling down and figuring out, 'How do we make things work for the next generation?'" Obama said. In the official Republican response, Haley, who was her state's first female and first Indian American governor, criticized Obama for having been too passive in the face of growing debt and threats like terrorists inspired by the Islamic State. "The President's record has often fallen far short of his soaring words. As he

enters his final year in office, many Americans are still feeling the squeeze of an economy too weak to raise income levels," Haley said. "Even worse, we are facing the most dangerous terrorist threat our nation has seen since September 11th, and this president appears either unwilling or unable to deal with it." But Haley, too, appealed to Americans to work together — and delivered a message of tolerance toward immigrants.

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