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WEATHER:

Today - Mostly sunny and very cold. North wind 5 to 10 mph.

Tonight - Bitterly cold, low around 15 below.



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Bill could let police learn mental record

By Erin Schulte
Staff Reporter

Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady said that without access to mental health records, he could put handguns in the hands of potentially dangerous people.

"I'm making guesses when people's lives are literally on the line," he said.

Casady testified in support of LB960 in the Nebraska Legislature's Judiciary Committee Thursday afternoon.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln, would grant access to confidential mental health records to the Nebraska State Patrol. Police officials could call the patrol for information on a person applying for a handgun permit.

Casady, who urged committee members to send the bill to the floor for debate, said he had received handgun applications from people who had run-ins with the police because of mental problems.

But because laws do not allow police access to mental health records, Casady said he had nothing to help him decide if the person was mentally competent.

The bill also would grant immunity for people who reported confidential mental health information to the patrol. Specifics would not be released, only a "yes" or "no" to the question of mental health treatment.

Sen. Wesely said the bill would allow police departments to carry out the Brady bill, which prohibits the sale of handguns to anyone who is "mentally defective or had been committed to any mental institution."

Also heard Thursday in the Judiciary Committee was LB943, introduced by Sen. Carol Hudkins of Malcolm.

The bill allows inmates, parolees, probationers or inmates on work release to act as undercover agents. It also allows evidence gathered by inmates or people on probation to be entered in court cases.

John Colborn, chief deputy Lancaster County attorney, said the standing law impeded law enforcement.

In one case, a 16-year-old female was sexually abused and forced into prostitution. The police could not help her because she was on probation.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said he saw problems with the bill. He said "jail-house snitches" were unreliable.

The committee took no action on either bill.

Legislature '96



Tanna Kinnaman/DN

Interim Chancellor Joan Leitzel, right, checks Friday's packed schedule with Beth Griffin, administrative assistant to the chancellor. James Moeser, former provost and vice president at the University of South Carolina, will take over as UNL's new chancellor on Monday.

Smooth transition

Chancellor change a cinch, Leitzel says

By Julie Sobczyk
Senior Reporter

As Joan Leitzel reflects on her time as UNL's interim chancellor, she says it won't be difficult for the university to change hands next week.

In fact, she'll do all she can to make James Moeser comfortable as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's new chancellor.

"I'll be one of the people who help him get orientated," she said. "But it won't be long before he has his feet set and is on his way."

Moeser, who was provost and vice president at the University of South Carolina, will begin his new duties Monday.

Leitzel, who took over last year after then-chancellor Graham Spanier accepted a position at Penn State University, will re-

sume her post as UNL's senior vice chancellor for academic affairs on Monday.

The university will adjust to Moeser's arrival just as it did when Spanier left, she said.

"These things are planned," Leitzel said. "There was no problem in continuity when Spanier left, and there will be no problems when Moeser begins."

And her time as interim chancellor was successful, Leitzel said.

"For the most part, it was rewarding," she said. "In a position like that, the job is to help others organize and move ahead."

One of her accomplishments last semester, she said, was planning for UNL's capital campaign, which is a major fund-raising event that begins in May.

"This event needs considerable planning

for what UNL's priorities are," Leitzel said.

Another priority was working with administrators at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to expand the joint engineering program with UNL, she said.

The hiring of Melvin Jones as UNL's new vice chancellor for business and finance was another positive aspect to last semester, she said.

"I think we'll all like working with him," Leitzel said.

And the future should look bright with new administrators like Jones and Moeser, she said.

"Each leader brings personal planning and personal priorities we should meet," Leitzel said. "I know we can make the transitions smoothly."

Study examines Nebraska inmate rape

By Chad Lorenz
Senior Reporter

A man sitting in his cell in a Nebraska correctional facility heard the words "give it up," and then it happened.

Two inmates entered the cell and demanded sex, but the man refused. The two began beating him, but he refused again.

Only when the other inmates threatened to kill him did he comply.

He was forced to perform oral sex on one while the other sodomized him. Then they switched.

They threatened to kill him if he ever told anyone.

And he is not alone.

A study of sexual coercion in Nebraska prisons revealed the frequency of inmate rape among men — and graphic stories such as the preceding account.

"The brutal assaults and all the gang rapes were disturbing to read," said Cindy Struckman-Johnson, a psychology professor at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

In April 1994, Struckman-Johnson surveyed 1,793 inmates from the Nebraska State Penitentiary, the Lincoln Correctional Center, the Omaha Correctional Center and the Women's Center.

Of a sample of 474 male inmates, 101 (22 percent) reported being forced into sexual contact of some kind. Three out of 42 women, about 7 percent, also reported sexual coercion.

Fifty-two percent of those (12 percent of the total sample) were victims of anal or vaginal rape.

Nebraska, because of its demographics, probably has fewer cases of sexual assault than a more-populated, urban state, Struckman-Johnson said.

"I'm sure the rates are much higher in other places," she said. "I think you've got a greater number and harder type of inmate."

The Causes

Struckman-Johnson said the rapes in prison were sexually, not violently, motivated.

"It's a sexual release," she said. "It's simply a way of having sex in prison."

She said she discounted theories that perpetrators sexually assault inmates because of a psychological need to dominate others.

"If it was a power thing, they'd just be beating people up," she said.

The perpetrators usually are not homosexual, she said, but view victims as the opposite sex.

"Some men become female-like

See RAPE on 6

VICTIMS OF INMATE RAPE

According to a survey of Nebraska prison inmates done by Cindy Struckman-Johnson at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion:

- 20 percent of respondents reported that they had been pressured or forced into sexual contact against their will (22 percent for men and 7 percent for women).
- More than 76 percent of targets reported that perpetrators used force tactics.
- 18 percent of the targets reported that prison staff had participated in the incident.

Aaron Steckelberg/DN