



Capitol Network News

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NEW PRIVATE PRISON NOT ENOUGH FOR DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The opening of a new private prison in Sayre in 1998 likely won't be enough to offset the continued influx of inmates into the state prison system, according to a spokesman for the Department of Corrections.

Corrections Corporation of America, which is based in Nashville, announced last week that it has agreed to build a 960-bed, medium security prison in Sayre to house adult male inmates. The \$29 million facility, which is expected to be completed by February 1998, will be financed with tax-exempt bonds issued by the Sayre Industrial Authority, which has contracted with the company for the design, construction and operation of the facility.

"I think our needs will continue to outpace what is planned to be built in Oklahoma over the next year," said Jerry Massie, spokesman for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

The Board of Corrections gave its approval in September to the department's largest budget request ever — \$350.5 million for operations and \$326.9 million for capital outlay, including the construction of additional prison space — and last month approved a \$25.3 million supplemental appropriations request, some \$6 million more than corrections officials had first indicated they would seek in August.

The Corrections Corporation announcement comes on the heels of two announcements concerning the construction of private women's facilities in the state, one to be located near Atoka and the other to be located near El Reno.

The plans, Massie said, are consistent with the goals of public policy makers to keep state inmates in Oklahoma. Currently, more than 1,500 state inmates are held in private facilities in Texas. Additional inmates are held at two in-state facilities, both operated by Corrections Corporation of America.

Massie noted that simply because a company plans to build a private prison does not automatically guarantee that they will do business with the state.

"Obviously, we'll have to look at each one once it is completed and ready to become operational," he explained. "We have set standards with which they must comply before we can do business with them."

FEE HIKE APPROVED AT OSU

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) At a special meeting last Saturday, the Board of Regents for Oklahoma A&M Colleges approved a proposal for a \$2 per credit hour fee for the renovation of Oklahoma State University's Gallagher/Iba Arena, a sports facility on the university campus in Stillwater.

Total projected cost of the enlargement of the basketball arena is \$45 million, which will bring the seating from 8,000 to 12-14,000, Natalea Watkins, spokesperson for OSU President James Halligan's office, said Tuesday. The student fee will bring in \$15 million over the next 20 years Watkins said. The university hopes to tap the City of Stillwater for half of the remaining funds needed and private donors for the rest, she added.

The fee, which would charge students enrolled in six or more hours \$2 per credit hour, was supported by all members of the regents. The student government association also approved the measure Nov. 6 with a vote of 30-3 by student representatives. Promises were made to the students when they were notified of the pending proposal, Watkins

said. "If they pay one-third of the cost, they will have one-third of the seats surrounding the floor," she said.

University officials hope to have the enlarged facility ready for the 1999 basketball season, Watkins said, but for every semester students pay the \$2 fee before the facility is ready, they will receive vouchers to buy tickets to the basketball games at student rates for the same length of time, even after they graduate.

If approved by the State Regents for Higher Education, the fee will first appear on student charges in the fall semester 1997. Students enrolled in five or fewer credit hours will not pay the fee. Students taking more than 18 hours will only be charged up to 18 credit hours for the fee.

With the addition of the new fee, in 1997 freshman and sophomore students will begin paying a base of \$52 per credit hour in tuition, plus a student activity fee of \$5.11 per credit hour; plus a facility fee of \$4.30 per credit hour; plus a library fee of \$2.25 per credit hour; plus an association fee of 85 cents per credit hour; plus a technology fee of \$5.00 per credit hour, for a total of \$69.51 in tuition and fees per credit hour.

What's Inside

Board of Agriculture Must Conduct Hearings on Land	2
Land Commission Holds Routine Meeting	2
Oklahoma Considers Open Studio Project	2
Millennium 2000 Problem to Cost State Millions	3
Oklahoma General Revenues Up, Ahead of Forecast	4
Hunter, Angler Numbers Up in Oklahoma, Constant in U.S.	4
105th Congress Greets New Members	4
National Education Initiatives	5
Input Received on Recreational Fisheries Management	6
FAA Testing New Infrared Sensor for Airport Use	7
New Airport Rescue and Firefighting Technology Developed	7
Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System Use by American Airlines Approved ..	7
Report on Operating Results of the Ten Largest Bus Companies Issued	8
National Farm City Week 1996	8
Calendar	9